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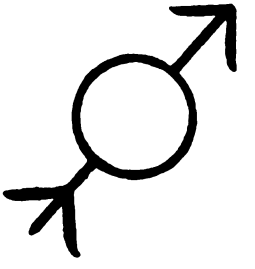

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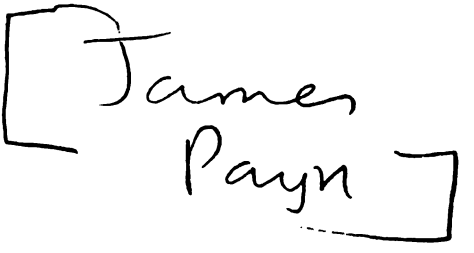
James
Payn

MURPHY'S MASTER,

AND OTHER STORIES.

BY

THE AUTHOR OF

'LOST SIR MASSINGBERD,' 'A PERFECT TREASURE,'
'GWENDOLINE'S HARVEST,' 'FOUND DEAD,'
'A WOMAN'S VENGEANCE,' ETC.

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MURPHY'S MASTER.

CHAPTER I.

PURSUED.

It was a boisterous winter's night; and although the long, straight road which I have in my mind (for to the first scene of this strange story my own eyes were witness) was many a mile distant from the coast, you might have thought, from the roaring of the trees that lined one side of it for miles, that it skirted the very shore. Now and then, for a brief space, there was a lull, but only that the Prince of the powers of the air might collect his forces for a more strenuous effort, as though to sweep the earth of all that cumbered it which man had made. The young moon had hidden herself, as though in terror, and it was but seldom that the clouds permitted a single star to peer through their hurrying ranks, as they fled like a beaten army across the sky.

A white toll-house and a white gate that stretched across the road could, however, be just made out, *gleaming through* the stormful gloom; but even these,

from their colour, looked weird and ghost-like, and by no means relieved the loneliness and desolation of the scene. Opposite the toll-house was an inn; but being built of darker material, it was not visible: not a light shone from its many windows, for the hour was three o'clock, and all its inmates, save one, were abed and slept—rocked to slumber by the storm. Suddenly, after an outburst of elemental violence that outdid all that had preceded it, and which was dying away like the passionate cry of some disappointed beast of prey, there was heard a human voice: 'Gate, gate!' It must have proceeded from powerful lungs indeed, since it was repeated before the galloping of horse's hoofs and the noise of wheels could be heard which proclaimed the approach of the vehicle which carried him who uttered this impetuous summons.

'Gate, gate!'

'Curse the fellow; he's asleep,' exclaimed another voice.—'Get out, Dick, and lift it off its hinges. Here, take a lamp.'

As the speaker leans hurriedly forward to take one of the dog-cart lamps from its place, the light is thrown full upon him. A tall, black-bearded man, very handsome, though long past his youth; his stooping position brings the blood into his face a little, else it would be very pale; his eyes are fiery and bloodshot. You would say he was a drunkard but for the steadiness of hand with which he disengages the lamp, and hands it to his fellow, notwithstanding the fury of the wind, which is once more up and roaring, and the impatient pawing of the mare he holds in his iron gripe. She is *bay, but, flecked* with her own foam, she looks in the *darkness black and* white. His lower lip is bleeding,

bitten through, perhaps, in his irritation and impatience; and on his shirt-front, among its coral studs, there is a red spot which is not coral, but blood. He is in evening dress, and notwithstanding the wild inclemency of the night has no great coat or wrapper of any kind. By his face and dress, you would take him for a gentleman; no one with brains could possibly take him for a vulgar person; but if a gentleman, he is plainly not one of the conventional type, who never hurries himself, nor gets in a passion. His eyes are flaming with rage; and he pours upon the turnpike gate anathemas so choice, and yet various, that it seems quite a pity to waste them on an inanimate object. If the turnpike man would but put his head out of window! But that neglectful official, who has a son at sea, is dreaming of a great tempest in the tropics, which Jack described to him in his last letter (six months old); and though he dimly hears that familiar cry of 'Gate, gate!' confuses it with the captain's orders, howled through the speaking-trumpet.

'*Quiet, quiet!* you devil!'—this to the mare; and the tall man (you can now see he is very tall) stands up in the dog-cart, and peers back upon the road he has come, and listens: nothing is to be seen but a wall of darkness, and nothing to be heard but the roaring wind. Somewhat appeased, as it seems, by this negative result, he then addresses his companion (to whose tardiness in opening the gate he has never once alluded, notwithstanding his impatience with the obstacle itself): 'Shall I come and help you, Dick, or shall I break this scoundrel's windows with my whip-handle?'

'No, *no, Masther* Frank,' returned the other, *straining and striving at the hinges*; 'I'll have it up in a

minute. It is just as well not to be seen by more people than we can help. One—two: there it is, off at last.'

He crossed the road with his burden, to let the vehicle pass through, and then placed the gate half-open, and fastened it in that position with a huge stone.

'There; now they'll think the way is clear,' observed he grimly; 'and if it's wheels that is afther us, I pity the next comer.'

'They'll ride, Dick; you may take your oath of that.'

'I suppose they will,' growled the other, as he climbed into his seat. 'If I'd 'a given it a thought, I'd 'a hamstrung the horses.'

The speaker of this truculent speech was a short, broad-shouldered man, of rough, though by no means ruffianly exterior. A cloth cap partly concealed his features, but what could be seen of them was rather attractive than otherwise, unless, indeed, you happened to be very anti-Milesian, for they were of that careless Irish type which seems to presage little of evil beyond dirt and drunkenness, and to promise faithfulness and endless fun. He wore a long frieze overcoat that reached to his gaiters, and though apparently of the same age as his companion, his appearance had nothing else in common with him. Their mutual relation in life would in fact at once have been taken for that of servant and master, except for the unusual warmth of manner that distinguished both, whenever they addressed one another. Dick sat on the hind seat, in order, doubtless, to watch the road along which their pursuers were expected, but always sideways, so that he could talk, as it were, into the other's ear—a nearness of communication, indeed, which the raging of the gale demanded.

'You'll be gettin' cold, Masther Frank,' observed he presently, the strong Irish accent in which he spoke now intensified by affectionate emotion. 'Just put this about you.'

'No wraps for me, Dick, to-night; I feel, even as it is, as though my very neck-tie choked me. Besides, that's your own coat, my good fellow;' and he put aside the frieze that his companion offered him, with a steady but gentle hand.

'Sure, and why wouldn't it be?' urged the other. 'Ain't I used to cold and such-like? Haven't I been reared up hard from the cradle?—not like you, Masther Frank, though we fed at the same mother's breast.'

'We did so, Dick; but that's no reason why you should literally give me the coat off your back; though I well know you would do more than that to serve me any day.'

'Yes, a deal more, in troth!'

'And yet, why should you, Dick? That sometimes puzzles me; for really I've done little for you.'

'Nothin' at all, sir, bar watchin' me, like a mother, for weeks, when nobody else would come nigh me, for fear of catchin' the spots! Nothin' at all, bar seein' me through that bad piece of work at Limerick Sessions, when I'd never have seen ould Ireland again at all, at all, but for you speakin' up for me, before them all, in the court-house! I owe you nothin' but life and liberty, that's true, sir; and they are things which nobody values!'

'But, my good fellow, I ran no personal risk in either of those things. I had been vaccinated, and was therefore secure from catching the smallpox; and as *for speaking up for* you in the court-house, why, I was

tarred with the same brush myself, and it would have been a mean and cowardly act, indeed, had I left you to bear the consequences of my own counsel.'

'You're always right, Masther Frank. I dare say, if the thing was properly put, you're more obligated to me nor I am to you. But in the mean time' (and here he changed his bantering tone for one of uncommon earnestness and fervour) 'I'm your friend and servant—yes, just that, with the blessin' of God' (he took off his cloth cap, and made the sign of the cross): 'drunk or sober, hale or sick, I'm your slave for life. I know it's foolish, sir' (for he saw the other was about to speak), 'but it's the same milk does it. It's stronger, by far, nor the same blood.'

A groan burst from the other's lips; and he lashed the mare, who was already going at headlong speed.

'That was a nice thing to say to the young masther, after what has happened,' muttered Dick to himself. 'Holy Moses, what an omadhawn I am!'

Not a word was exchanged between the pair for several minutes; and, indeed, the rate at which they were going almost precluded it. But presently, as the pace slackened somewhat, in consequence of some rising ground, the one who was called Master Frank once more broke silence.

'Dick,' said he, 'I want you to listen to me with all the sense you have, and as little of the fantastic notions belonging to County Tipperary as possible. You have shown your devotion to my person; and if I were to part with you to-day for ever, I should say you were the most faithful friend that ever man had. In accompanying me to Falston, I little thought, of *course, that I* was causing risk either to myself or

you; but as it has happened, I have done you a most serious injury. Are you aware, Dick, that, in the eye of the law, you have become an accessary after the fact?'

'Bedad! I'm not, sir; but it's yourself that's always afther tellin' me fine news; and I can easily believe it. It must be a grand thing, sure!'

Richard Murphy's countenance, as it reposed almost upon his companion's shoulder, was so singularly free from expression, that it was impossible to glean from it whether he was in joke or earnest. Frank Kavanagh, however, knew his henchman much too well to be in doubt as to his meaning.

'You are hiding your feelings, Dick,' continued he, with irritation, 'under a mask of humour, when I wish you, above all things, to be serious and frank. The deed that has been done this night—unpremeditated, undreamed of, as Heaven knows it was—will be held by the law of the land to be no less than Murder. The provocation will never be taken into account, nor the long years of hypocrisy and deceit. If it was to do again, Dick? if I saw his mocking face set close to mine once more, and heard him sneer: "You bastard"'—

'Did he say that, Masther Frank?' interrupted Dick, with intense excitement. 'O the villain!'

'He flouted me; he spoke bitter things of my mother, as though she had not been his own too. And then he attacked our father's memory: that was too much. When I remembered how I had seen Louis fawn and flatter, and strive to cozen the kind old man every way; and saw him then, triumphant in his fraud, and sneering at the folly of his dead benefactor, I [redacted] *him by the throat, Dick*—I'—

'Hush, hush! Put my coat on, Masther Frank; there's a spot on your shirt-front that is not iron-mowld. I saw that from the first, though I didn't like to speak. Hide it, Masther Frank, lest them might see it that has less right than I to know how it got there;' and he wrapped the coat around his stalwart companion, who seemed neither to consent nor to resist, as tenderly as a mother cloaks her babe.

'He brought it on his own head, I tell you,' cried the other fiercely, as though in answer to some reproachful question. 'He denied me my rights, my natural rights, and what, but for him, would have been my legal ones. If he had only been fair-spoken, though dishonest'——

'Bah! why trouble yourself,' broke in Dick, 'with thinkin' about the Thing? It's vain to cry over spilt'——

'He struck me first,' continued Master Frank, not heeding the other's interruption: 'I feel the blow on my cheek yet. He was a dead man then, and he knew it. I had no idea there was such strength in him, Dick.'

'He came of a good stock, you see,' observed Murphy coolly. 'The breedin' told at last with him, though it was rather late. Upon my life, Masther Frank, I can't see what you are makin' this bother about, for conscience' sake. He was a bad lot altogether, savin' his brother's presence, and his end is a good riddance to all that's in it. If this had but happened in the ould counthry, the boys would have stuck by you with alibis and everything necessary, and there would have *been no trouble* about the matter at all, at all.'

'*That may be,* Dick; but, unhappily, what has been

done, has been done here; and at the very best, it is quite certain that I shall never see the boys again. I must put the broad seas between myself and England, if I would save my neck. And that brings me to what I wished to say at first. If the law takes hold of me, and finds you in my company, it will go hard with you also; for it is as like as not that some one down yonder'—he pointed to the road behind them—'may recognize your honest face. As for me, I am a lost man, unless I can leave Europe, and get somewhere out of the reach of what these fools call Justice.'

'It's as bad as that, sir, is it?' answered Murphy. 'I'd no idea they'd be so hard upon you? It's the divil gives them the gumption to do it: he knows that if you were with us, the Good Cause at home must triumph, sooner or later; and so, all along of a family squabble, he gets you put out of the way.'

'No, Dick, no,' replied the other mournfully; 'the Good Cause is dead, at all events for my life-time. The match was applied too soon, and so, after a brief flicker, the fire went out, and will now be harder to kindle than ever. I told you how it would be, when you struck the light; and my advice to you now is, to go home as quickly as possible, and lie there quiet, and persuade the boys to do the like. I have plenty of money for you'——

'You're not goin' to *bribe* me to leave you, Masther Frank?' interrupted the other. 'It's hard enough to put it so to me, any way.'

'Bribe you? of course not, you foolish fellow: I do but point out what is the sensible, and, I think, the proper course for you to adopt. You leave me in good *health, and, so far* as funds go, in p——

have nothing, therefore, to reproach yourself with.'

'Holy Moses, only hear him talk!' ejaculated Murphy. 'It isn't Masther Frank at all that I am listenin' to, but Pat Morris, the Limerick attorney! "Nothing to reproach myself with!" The boys would not think that when I got back to County Tipperary, I reckon. "And how did you leave the young masther, whom we all love so?" inquires one. "Oh, finely," says I; "unless they've hanged him. I didn't stay to see it out, but filled my own pockets, and"—— As sure as death, Masther Frank, I hear horses' hoofs behind us.'

'I know it,' answered the other calmly; 'I have heard them for some minutes. There are two men at least, but it is no matter if there were half-a-dozen. I will not be taken alive.'

'Divil a fear of you, Masther Frank. It is much more these gentlemen's look-out nor ours. I've got the pistols under the sate here.'

'What pistols?'

'Why, your own, of course. A gentleman never moves without his pistols. I packed them up when I heerd tell of you goin' to Falston; "for," says I to myself, "they'll quarrel, will Masther Frank and Louis, to a certainty; and then what a comfort it will be to both to know that everythin' is at hand to settle the business like gentlemen."'

'Did you think, then, that I should shoot, in cold blood, at my own brother?'

'I thought that there would be a difficulty of some sort—such as one of you, at laste, wouldn't be willin' the lawyers should meddle with. But since that has been got over in another way, so much the better; the pistols are still to the fore. If these gentlemen only

knew what was waitin' for them, they wouldn't be in such an infernal hurry. Don't you disturb yourself, Masther Frank: I never was so beautifully fixed for shootin' in my life; it's quite a luxury. But keep the mare well in hand, for she isn't used to standin' fire.'

While he was thus speaking, Dick stooped beneath the seat, and drawing from their case a couple of pistols, deliberately capped them, and then sat calmly with one in each hand awaiting events.

'There has enough blood been spilled to-night already,' said the other earnestly, without, however, interfering with these preparations for receiving cavalry; 'and I would give much to escape these fellows even upon their own account. Surely it is about here that the road forks to Ascot: if we could only take that turning, and so double upon them, we should be safe so long as the dark held.'

'True; but the dark is so divilish dark, I doubt we shall hardly see the turnin'; it must, however, as you say, be somewhere nigh at hand. Keep the mare well in hand, sir; and I'll douse the glims, so that they may not see we have left the road.'

'That's well thought of; but they ride fast, those fellows, and you must be quick about it.'

'We have five good minutes, Masther Fred.; this tearin' wind is with them, and brings up the sound'——

'Stop! Hi! Stop!'

The cry arose right in front of them; and the flaring lamps, one of which Murphy was in act to remove, fell full upon a gesticulating figure standing in the midst of the dark road. It was that of a very young man, attired in homely garments, and bearing the *homeliest luggage of* the wayfarer—a hedge-

his shoulder, at the end of which depended a small bundle.

'Clear the way!' cried Kavanagh, stung to reckless fury by the imminence of the peril behind him, 'or, by Heaven, I'll drive over you.'

But the boy, throwing down his bundle, cast himself upon the bridle of the mare, and clung to it fast, though in her fierce career she carried him along with her, and never ceased his cry of 'Stop, stop, stop!'

'I'll "stop" you, young fellow,' muttered Murphy between his teeth, as he clambered back over the dog-cart for a pistol.

'The tree—the fallen tree!' screamed the boy. 'Keep to the right, or you are both dead men!'

At that piercing cry, Kavanagh mechanically pulled his right rein, and the vehicle sprang into the air, once, twice, thrice, and then came to a full stop. To leap out was with the two men the work of an instant.

'Hold the mare, boy.—Help me here, Dick, to pull the tree right across: so. I don't hear the horses now: how's that?'

We must have passed the turnin', and they are stoppin' there, in doubt of which road to take.'

'Just so.—Boy, you have done us a good turn,' said Kavanagh kindly: 'another foot to the left, and we should have gone to the devil; whereas, as it is, we have but got a shaking over the branches. What can we do for *you*?'

'If you'd give me a lift, sir, towards town, I'd be very grateful,' said the lad. He was a wholesome, blue-eyed young fellow, with a comely face, flushed with his late exertions, and a bright, eager air.

'*You shall have* it, lad. Go, fetch your bundle.'

'Nay, Masther Frank,' remonstrated Murphy, as the young fellow obeyed; 'that is surely most imprudent; and there—see—he has noticed how the tree lies.'

The boy, whose attention had been hitherto absorbed in holding the mare, was now, indeed, observing with surprise, that that which had been before an obstacle difficult to avoid, was now become an effectual barricade. 'Begging your pardon, sir,' said he ingenuously, 'I fear you have made things worse for the next comers, instead of better.'

'What the Divil is that to you, sir?' cried Murphy angrily.

'Hush, hush! The lad is an honest lad,' said Kavanagh, 'and wants to do right to everybody. I was like that myself, at one time, God help me!—Look here, boy: if *you* were followed by persons who wished to punish you for what they deemed a crime, but of which your conscience held you innocent, would you not do your best to balk them?'

'Yes, indeed, sir,' exclaimed the boy warmly: 'moreover, that is just what might be happening to myself now.'

'What! Have you been transgressing the laws already?—Why, this must be a countryman of our own, Dick!'

Dick muttered something which sounded like a compliment to his country, at the expense of the newcomer.

'I have broken no laws, sir,' said the boy, steadily; 'I have only run away from step-father.'

'Very right, very proper,' remarked Master Frank *approvingly*. 'Curiously enough, I also am running

away from my step-mother, Madam England.—By gad! they're coming, Dick!'

'Of course they are. That's what comes of wasting precious moments in chatterin' to every young vagabond one meets with upon the road: and all the time with them gig-lamps turned right round, as much as to say: "This way: here we are: you've taken the wrong turnin', gentlemen."'

'They will prove Wreckers' lights, to lure them to destruction, Dick. Douse them, douse them.'

In one instant all was dark; not a trace of trunk or branch could now be seen of the huge tree that lay before them like a rampart. On the still furious wind was borne once more the sound of galloping hoofs and clanging steel.

'It is the patrol from the Heath,' murmured the lad in awe-stricken tones; 'I hear the clanging of their scabbards.'

The wind was behind their pursuers: the hill sloped from them towards the tree; they were riding at headlong speed.

'O sir! they will be killed. As *you* would have'—

A heavy hand was laid on the lad's mouth, a grasp of iron upon his wrist. He could neither speak nor move, but only listen. Nearer and nearer came the beat of feet, the clang of steel; the very champing of the bits could be heard; then crash, crash came horse and man, with one terrible cry, that seemed to pierce the wintry sky!

CHAPTER II.

TAKING SERVICE.

THERE was silence for a minute, save for the roaring of the gale, then the boy felt himself lifted into the cart, and away sped the bay mare on her road again, as though she knew that Death and Ruin were at her heels.

'They're gruelled, Masther Frank,' was the first observation that was made in allusion to this catastrophe; 'them patrols is too heavy for steeple-chasin'.'

'I didn't cut down the tree. Their blood be on their own heads,' muttered Kavanagh gloomily. Then with eagerness: 'Where's the boy? I hope he got no hurt?'

'He's here, sir, safe enough. He wanted a lift, so I thought it just as well to give it to him for a mile or two, so as to keep him out of harm's way. If I hadn't gagged the young divil, he'd 'a given warnin' to them fellows.'

'Put him here in front.'

'No, no, Masther Frank; you've got your hands full with the mare; and he wriggles like an eel.'

'Put him *here*, I say!' repeated Kavanagh imperiously.

The next instant the lad was swung on to the front seat, *with as much ease as though he had been a*

carpet-bag. And yet he was a fine grown young fellow of seventeen or eighteen, with plenty of strength and vigour of his own, as had been already evidenced by his stopping the mare.

'What is your name, lad?' asked Kavanagh kindly.

A stifled cough was the only reply.

'You're throttling the boy, Murphy. Did not I tell you to leave him to me?'

'I only put my finger in his neckhankecher to keep him studdy,' exclaimed Murphy apologetically.

'Then take it out. He has done us a great benefit at the risk of his own life and limb, and I will not have him ill-used. Do you hear me, Murphy?'

It was clear that Murphy had no good-will towards the boy, not to say that, on the whole, he would far rather have strangled him than not; yet his tone was that of absolute submission as he answered, 'I hear you, Masther Frank, and it is done.'

'My name is Robert Chesney,' said the lad, articulating with some difficulty.

'Take a drop of the crater, Robert Chesney,' observed Dick, at the same time handing him a whiskey-flask. 'There's nothin' like it for a sore throat. Never mind av it does burn you a bit: can't you see the masther wants you to talk to him?'

He spoke with entire simplicity; it seemed to him that what Master Frank desired must needs be acceded to by everybody, at no matter what personal inconveniences.

'If it does not hurt you, let me hear your story, boy,' said Kavanagh. 'How came you to be out on the high-road *in such a mad night as this?*'

'*There are worse things than the winter winds, sir,*'

said the lad bitterly, 'such as cruelty, poverty, and hopelessness, and it was they that drove me out into it to-night. I am seventeen, and too old to be beaten any longer by a drunken step-father.'

'Unless, by bearing that, you could help your mother,' said Kavanagh. There was a tenderness in his voice, which contrasted very strangely with the passion he had so lately exhibited, and with the vindictive coolness which had permitted the patrol to rush upon their doom.

'My mother died last year, sir. There is nobody at home to care for me. Step-father is one of the keepers in the Queen's forest; he never liked me; but of late he has taken to cudgel me, and I could not stand that, even for mother's sake.'

'I don't blame you for that, Robert. On the contrary, I should have cudgelled *him*.'

'So I did, sir,' replied the other naïvely. 'We had a rough-and-tumble out in the oak copse, and I got the worst of it. I knew it was not so bad as I should get if I waited till to-morrow morning; and so, when he went out to watch, I packed up the few things I could call my own, and ran away. I had scarce got into the road yonder, when the big tree fell, within a yard of me; and seeing your lamps, I ran on ahead to warn you. That's my story.'

'All of it?' asked Kavanagh, casting a searching glance at his companion. The rage of the tempest had spent itself, and the stars had begun to peep through the thinning clouds.

'Yes, all of it; so far, at least' (and here, notwithstanding his bold speech, the young fellow blushed like *a girl*), *'as it concerns you*

'Tis best you keep a civil tongue in your head,' exclaimed Murphy, scandalized at this audacity, 'when the masther does you the honour to ask a question.'

'The lad is quite right,' said Master Frank good-naturedly. 'We don't boast of our sweethearts at seventeen.—Do we, Robert? So the wide world is before you, where to choose, and only one friend in it?'

'Nay, sir; I have not one friend.'

'You are wrong there, my lad; for no man ever did a good turn to Frank Kavanagh, let me tell you, without making a friend.'

An ejaculation of horror burst from Murphy's lips. 'There now, we *must* kill him, Masther Frank, since you've told him who ye are. Did ever man hear of such madness!' and once more the lad felt his wrist compressed as in a vice, while an arm like a cable stole round his waist.

'Leave the boy, I say!' cried Kavanagh furiously, and for the first time speaking with an Irish accent. 'Thousand thunders! have I to speak three times? If you do him hurt, by Heaven, you shall answer to me for it!'

'But he'll tell, Masther Frank.'

'*Let* him tell. It would be only *un*doing what he has done for us, if he did.—Yes, boy; I *am* Frank Kavanagh—a name that you will soon hear identified with that of a murderer. Do I *look* like that? I don't deny I did the deed; but yet, I am no murderer. Will you believe them, or me?'

The young fellow looked up in his companion's handsome face, and answered ingenuously: 'I shall *believe you,* Mr Kavanagh; still, I don't think you *did right to* leave the tree in the road.'

'It was a question of those men's lives or mine, Robert Chesney. A hunted man cannot afford to be squeamish. Now, look you: I like your face, and would gladly do you a good turn, in guerdon for that you have done to me. What shall it be? You need not fear to ask, boy.'

'I was thinking, could you take me into your service, sir?' answered the lad hesitatingly.

'You would find it a very poor one, my good lad,' said Kavanagh sadly. 'I am a desperate man in desperate case. In a few days, if I escape the vengeance of the law, I shall be leaving England for a distant land, and perhaps for ever.'

'So be it, sir. Let me go with you. I have heard my step-father say that England is not the place for a moneyless lad.'

'But what had you in your mind to do before we met?'

'I was bound for London, to try my fortune.'

'Thinking the streets were paved with gold, like Whittington, I suppose! Have you got a cat in your bundle?'

'He'll have one in his bag—more's the pity,' muttered Murphy despondently; 'and, mark my word, he'll let it out.'

'Well, you can hardly be said to change your plan for a worse, since you have none at all, lad,' continued Kavanagh. 'What can you do with your hands or your head?'

'I can carpenter fairly, sir; and was pretty good at school, in the way of accounts.'

'Do you hear *that*, Dick?' said Kavanagh merrily. '*The lad knows* accounts—a thing which you and

I could never compass. Suppose we make him our treasurer and comptroller?'

This change in Kavanagh's mood from grave to gay, from passionate self-justification to almost levity, was by no means shared by his henchman. 'You will do as you like, Masther Frank,' said he moodily. 'I only trust the young man will be grateful and faithful.'

'As for faithful, I say nothing of that,' said Chesney modestly, 'though I will endeavour to prove myself so, if I am taken into your service, sir; but grateful for your good intentions and your kindness, believe me, I already am.'

'That's well said, lad,' said Kavanagh heartily. 'And you have "no objection to travel," as the advertisements say?' In the midst of a light laugh, he stopped, and added gravely: 'I am not offering you a place in the household of a man of fortune, nor is it a tour of pleasure that we are about to take. We shall have a hard life, and an up-hill fight of it; but if you are content to link your lot with that of an outcast, remember—— Well, there's my hand upon it.'

'Thank you, sir; thank you,' cried the boy, with grateful emotion. 'I trust you will never have cause to repent the bargain.'

'Amen! but I doubt it,' muttered Murphy; then in louder tones: 'Ye'll surely make him take the oath, Masther Frank?'

'Not I,' laughed Kavanagh. 'Why, my poor Dick, do you suppose that the words which bind the boys of county Tipperary will have the same effect on a lad from the royal forest of Windsor? He would not even *know their* meaning. He has an honest face, and I *will take his* bare word. Come, you must shake hands

with our new friend, as I have done, and then we three will meet the world together.'

It was curious, and even comical, to mark the conflict of feeling in Mr Richard Murphy's face as he received this order. Obedience to Kavanagh was a paramount obligation with him, but he could not conceal the intense disfavour with which he regarded this command.

'It's downright mad you are, Masther Frank. Here's my hand, if you must have it so, but'——

'Give it to *him*, man, not to me,' cried the other, more merrily than ever. 'You're as bad to drive as a pig to market. Hold it tight, Dick, and now say these words after me;' and he spoke a long sentence in what Chesney rightly judged to be his native Irish. Slowly and reluctantly, with a face such as a child wears who is taking physic with no jam to follow, Murphy repeated this Abracadabra.

'Now, Dick is your friend as well as mine, lad,' said Kavanagh assuringly.

Murphy muttered something in his own tongue which sounded like a menace.

'Don't be rude, Dick; you should never speak the classical languages before those who have not enjoyed the opportunities of making them their own.—What he said, my lad, was, as it is only fair to tell you, that he reserved to himself the right of putting you to death, in case you should not keep silence as respects what has happened to-night. Now all is settled satisfactorily: and see—there are the lights of London—our journey is coming to an end.'

Robert Chesney looked with eagerness in the direction thus indicated, and

Along the dusky highway, near and nearer drawn;
Saw in heaven the light of London flaring like a dreary dawn;
And his spirit leapt within him to be gone before him then,
Underneath the light he looked at, in among the throngs of men.

If he had not met with his present fellow-traveller, his excitement would probably have been far greater; for now (although he knew them not) his future plans were to be laid out for him by another; he was not about to plunge alone into that unknown and fathomless human sea. His crude purpose had been, to plod through street after street until he should see a carpenter's shop, and there to stop, and ask for employment. A dream which was not destined to become reality. Neither footsore nor friendless, but seated at his ease, and without any immediate cares, he was at liberty to look about him in the great city.

The dawn was breaking as they entered it, and already the streams of traffic were setting in towards the markets. With the country produce carried in the carts and waggons, he was familiar enough, but that only made the amount of it more striking; what was all that he had ever seen in Windsor street upon a market-day to be compared with it! Then what a noise and tumult arose as the day wore on! How different from the stillness of the forest glades to which he had been accustomed, where the scamper of a rabbit through the fern would startle the ear. The streets at first were shuttered, and the gas feebly strove in them against the daylight; then shops began to open, and the thoroughfares to fill; and then again they entered a region where sleep reigned once more. Here the houses were far larger and handsomer, there were statues, too, and gardens; and many a question rose to Chesney's lips,

which, however, did not pass them. His companion's face had become pale and moody: the excitement of the night was probably wearing off, and its consequences making themselves clear to him; at all events, he was disinclined for converse. With scarce the interchange of a word, the three passed through the suburbs, the West End, and part of the City. At last Kavanagh pulled up the mare in an unfrequented street.

'She has done a good night's work,' said he; then added to himself with a groan: 'I wish to Heaven I could say as much for her driver.—See that they treat her well at the inn, Dick; you will not have much longer to perform that service, since there will be no room for her on shipboard, even if we are so lucky as to get there. Here; take the reins.'

'But where are you goin' to, Masther Frank?' asked Dick, aghast.

'To the old place in Herne Street. It will be much better for both of us that we should not be seen together for the present. Take the boy with you to Mulvaney's, and let him want for nothing; and stay there till you hear from me.—Chesney, if, in a moment of rash impulse, I have done wrong in coupling your fate with my own desperate fortunes, there is still time for you to cry off the bargain.—You hold to it? Good! Then, I conclude you will need no warning, but be in readiness to start with us at a moment's notice—it may be to-morrow night, though Heaven alone knows whither. In the mean time, here are the means to make merry with.'

The next instant the speaker had pressed two pieces of money into the lad's hand, and was retracing with *rapid strides the* way that he had come. At the end of

the street was a warehouse, with a crane projecting from its third floor, from which depended a thick rope; under this he stopped, looked up at it significantly, and placed his hands around his neck, then walked on at increased speed.

'Blessed St Francis, did you see *that?*' inquired Murphy, in an awe-stricken whisper.

'I did,' said Chesney; 'but I don't think Mr Kavanagh knew that he was doing it.'

'Not know what he was doin'? D'ye mean to say that the young masther has got the fever in his brain again, that—— But maybe he was only jokin'. He was always full of jokes, and fun, and thricks in the ould days—in the ould, ould days.'

There was a tremor in Murphy's voice that instantly drew his companion's eyes upon him. 'Don't laugh at me, lad,' exclaimed he fiercely, as he shook the bridle, and the gallant mare made shift to trot once more: 'don't jeer me, lest I strike you dead.' The tears were coursing down Dick's weather-beaten cheeks like rain.

CHAPTER III.

MULVANEY'S.

THE rest of their journey was soon ended: Murphy stopped at an inn, where he saw the mare rubbed down *and fed, with his* own eyes, ere he took his young com*panion to the lodgings* hard by, which Kavanagh had

indicated. Mulvaney's was an eating-house of humble exterior, situated in a secluded street, whereof the houses were old and gabled, and mostly built of wood: a piece of streaky bacon and some potatoes appealed to hungry stomachs in the ground-floor window; while above, the words 'Good Beds' addressed themselves to tired limbs. The inside of this house, which modestly drew back a little from its neighbours, was of more pretension than the outside: though the rooms were small—with the exception of the public one, which was divided into boxes, shining with grease and age—they were very numerous, and wainscoted with oak. Most persons finding it in so humble a place, would have taken this panelling for discoloured deal, but Chesney, familiar with timber, knew better, and marvelled at it. The staircase was of the same material, its steps broad and shining: its balustrades curiously carved with fruit and flowers, though these were hardly discernible for the dirt that begrimed them. The mansion had doubtless been the residence of some rich and thrifty citizen in the olden time; it had been the pride of some Dame Margery to keep the oak well polished, and to see that the sleeping-rooms smelled of dried lavender. But Dame Margery had been dead these hundred years and more; and if Widow Mulvaney, who reigned in her stead, had a preference for any odorous herb above another, it was for onions.

The smell of onions always arising from the kitchen, like a perpetual incense, pervaded the whole establishment, which was impregnated with it. You might have taken a square inch of wood-work in the spring-time from any part of the interior of the house, carried it to *the Land's End*, and stuck it up there for a windy

summer, then placed it in a chest of ottar of roses for the winter, and in the spring again, when you took it out, your nose should tell you still: 'This came from Mulvaney's.' You might steep, you might shatter the wood at your will, but the scent of those onions would cling round it still. They were the chief ingredient in that Irish stew to which the frequenters of Mulvaney's (who were all from the Emerald Isle) were so patriotically partial. Even at the early hour at which our travellers arrived under this hospitable roof, the grateful perfume was stealing up the kitchen-stairs, and renewing its powers everywhere. Only one chamber, as in the case of Bluebeard's wife, was denied to it. At the back of the great eating-room was a smaller apartment, used, probably, in ancient times as the citizen's own parlour, from whence he could keep his eye upon the 'prentices in the shop; but now set apart as a withdrawing room for smokers: here the smell of tobacco and the reek of whiskey devoured, like an Aaron's rod, all other odours.

'We'll breakfast in the smoke-room, till Mistress Mulvaney,' had been Murphy's first words to the girl who admitted them within-doors; and in this more private chamber their meal had accordingly been spread. While the travellers were doing ample justice to it, there entered through an inner door the proprietress herself, a stout and rosy-cheeked widow, whom Mr Richard Murphy—rising hastily from his chair, and sweeping the back of his hand across his lips—at once saluted with a very audible kiss.

'Be aisy, Dick,' said she, but so calmly, that the *words were robbed* of their rebuke, 'and behave your*self before folk.* Who is this?'

'A friend of the young masther's,' answered Murphy.

'Good! Then he is welcome, as, of course, are you, Dick; though I am sorry to see you *here*.' She looked around her significantly. 'What's the matter now, that you must needs have a room with two doors to it?'

'The very divil's loose!' said Murphy; 'I mustn't talk about it even to you. There's nothin' agin myself this time; but Chesney—that's the boy yonder—and me are to be quiet here till we have our orders. Can you put us away up-stairs somewhere?'

'To be sure I can, if it was for a twelvemonth. You shall have the front room, and Biddy shall leave hers, and come to mine—that will give one to the masther's friend. It is but an attic, but'—

'Any place will do for me, ma'am,' interrupted Chesney simply.

'Oh, he ain't a young prince disguised, if that's what you mean,' said Murphy, with a coarse laugh.

'He's a sight better looking, and a deal better spoken, than ever you were, anyway, Mr Imperence!' returned the widow.—'You've been up all night, I reckon, my good lad, and would not be sorry to feel your bed, so I'll see that it is got ready for you.' And off she hurried.

'You'll not take your clothes off, boy, mind that,' said Murphy imperiously. 'Remember what the young masther said: that you must be ready for a start at a moment's notice; and you'll hould your tongue, no matter how the widow yonder may blarney you; and you'll swear not to leave this house, neither night nor day'—

'*I shall obey Mr Kavanagh* in every particular; ob-

served Chesney haughtily, and with a strong stress upon the name.

'It will be your better plan, Master Smooth-face, for the hour in which he comes to harm through fault of yours will be your last, as sure as my name's Richard Murphy.'

The colour deepened in the lad's wholesome cheek, and his blue eyes flashed scornfully as he replied, 'I have seen enough of one bully in my life, Mr Murphy, to make me very resolute against putting up with another. I was not afraid of your pistol, when you wanted to murder me for stopping your horse, and saving your life, and I am not afraid of your big words; so you may spare your breath for other purposes than to threaten me. You have laid your ugly hand upon me twice'—

'Begorra, and I'll do it a third time, and to some purpose!' cried Murphy with a hideous oath, as he rose to put his words into effect. Chesney also rose, and snatched up a knife from the table.

'This is keeping quiet with a vengeance, Mr Murphy,' exclaimed the widow, re-entering the room at this critical moment, and precipitating herself between the would-be combatants; 'and very pretty treatment of the young masther's friend, I'm sure.'

'He's got a knife,' said Dick, abashed and apologetically.

'And quite right too, when he has to deal with a mad dog. Did Masther Frank give you orders to beat the lad?'

'No,' said Dick humbly, and resuming his seat. 'I was wrong. I'm sorry.'

'*Not half so sorry* as you would have been had you *laid a finger on me*,' cried Chesney boldly.

'Tush, tush, put the steel by, lad,' whispered the widow. 'Dick has not had his whiskey this morning, and is not himself. Come, let me show you your room.'

Robert Chesney picked up his bundle and followed her without even bestowing a glance at his late antagonist.

'You mustn't mind Dick,' said she, confidentially, on their way up-stairs: 'if anybody else had offered to hurt *you*, he'd have flown at them just the same. Here's your sleeping-room, which is but small; but if you want anything, you have only to name it.'

'I should like some ink, if you please,' said the lad; 'that's all.'

'Ink?' answered the widow admiringly. 'What! you can write, can you? Why, Dick couldn't write his name to save his life!'

'Pen and paper I have in my bundle,' observed Chesney; 'it's only ink I want, and the favour of getting my note posted when I've written it.'

'I thought from the first he was one of the quality,' murmured Widow Mulvaney, as she went down-stairs: 'his hair curled so, and he was so soft-spoken, and now he is for writing notes. I wonder whether it will be to his mother, poor lad. He ain't one of our own boys, who fall in love before they are short-coated, or, I should say, since he is in such haste, that it must needs be to his sweetheart.'

Weary and travel-stained as he looked, Robert Chesney was indeed a well-favoured youth, very different from the majority of customers with whom Mrs Mulvaney was wont to deal. Though humbly born and rudely bred, he had had the advantage of a good *schooling, and took* a pride in his

unusual with those of his own age and position in life. But for the circumstances of a drunken step-father and an unhappy home, he might have risen from being the head pupil of a national school to any pinnacle of parochial greatness; but domestic injustice and tyranny had warped a mind naturally sensitive enough to the claims of authority, and set his feet on a far different path. Of kindness, to which he was but little used, he was very susceptible, and Kavanagh's words and manner had won his heart, at a time peculiarly opportune for making a pact of friendship. Unimpulsive himself, he had been attracted by the other's reckless confidence to a degree that astonished him, as he now reviewed in quiet the stirring events of the past night. It was satisfactory, of course, that within a few hours from his voluntary exile from his step-father's roof, he should have found a helpful friend, a temporary home; and possibly a career for the future: but what price might he not have to pay for these undoubted advantages? Nay, what price might he not have already paid for them? He had been seen by many in company with one who, even by his own account, had incurred the highest penalty of the law. He did not for a moment believe him to be guilty in a moral sense; his own experience of life, which had somehow placed the sense of justice in opposition to obedience to authority, inclined him to take this view; while Kavanagh himself, independent of his disclaimer, impressed him as being quite incapable of an atrocity; but still his fortunes had evidently become linked with that of a dangerous and desperate man. The measure of precaution *that* had been taken to insure his new friend's escape *from his pursuers*, was, to say the least of it, a strong

one. If Murphy had not prevented him, he, for his part, it is true, would have given warning of their danger to the hapless patrol, who, for all he knew, had met with their deaths from the fallen tree; but he had not done so, and he was now the willing companion of those who had caused the catastrophe. For all that he had run away from home with nothing beyond what he carried on his back, and with very hazy notions of gaining a livelihood, Robert Chesney was a sensible English lad, who looked matters in the face even when they were serious.

As to breaking the word he had passed to Kavanagh, to keep silence upon his late adventure, that never entered into his mind; but he did ponder with precocious gravity upon the advisability of cutting his new connections altogether. Murphy was abhorrent to him, of course—a brutal copy of his own drunken step-father; but there was this difference: from early association, his relative by marriage had obtained a certain ascendency over him; until quite recently, indeed, he had never even resisted his correction; but as for *this* hulking savage (his thoughts were pregnant with unsavoury epithets for him), he did not fear him one whit. His society—so much of it, at least, as would be necessary for him to endure—would, doubtless, be distasteful to him; but his pride revolted against making this a very important item in his calculations. And, on the other hand, he had taken something more than a fancy for Murphy's master. Robert had met with gentlemen, and very grand ones, in his time—magnates of his own and other countries, who had shot in the royal park, under his step-father's guidance, and for whom *he had acted as beater* or game-bearer; but he had

never seen so kindly a face, never heard such gentle tones, as those of Frank Kavanagh. No doubt, the kindliness and gentleness had gained by contrast with the moodiness, and even ferocity, he had also exhibited: the self-willed and passionate man has always that advantage over his more equable fellows, that when he does make himself agreeable, it is all the more appreciated, like a clump of trees on a bare moor; and Kavanagh had showed his genial side only to the boy, his rougher attributes to others. Moreover, he had trusted to his word, just as though he had been a gentleman instead of a poor lad, and that in a matter of the gravest sort. It was a rash and reckless thing to have done in so serious a case, and on so short an acquaintanceship, as the boy himself could well understand; and this endeared his new friend to him all the more. Lastly, to have his vague plan for the future fashioned for him into some practical shape, would have been very welcome, even had it taken a less attractive guise; and this suggestion of leaving England and seeking his fortune in some far-away region, exactly chimed in with his own longings. But perhaps what, more than aught else, finally decided Robert Chesney to accept, on reflection, the proposal which he had so hastily embraced, was this trifling circumstance: as he stood in the national attitude for reflection, with one hand scratching his head, and the other thrust into his breeches-pocket, the jingle of golden coin fell upon his ear. With the rattle of copper he was familiar, with the chink of silver even he had some acquaintance; but to rub one piece of gold against another had never yet *fallen within his own* experience. He pulled out the two *sovereigns which his* patron had given him to make

merry with, and gazed on them as an Esquimaux gazes on a clasp-knife, or an Otaheitan woman on a looking-glass.

Hope is cheerful, and ambition is seductive; but the possession of ready-money in the unaccustomed hand, is the realization of man's brightest dream.

CHAPTER IV.

A LOVE LETTER.

Two golden sovereigns to make merry with! He had slipped them into his pocket, taking them for shillings, his attention—to do him justice—being occupied at the time with bidding adieu to the donor; and he had not thought of them since. How profitable should that service be in which such a sum was bestowed as the means of mere amusement! And yet Robert Chesney's mind was not a grasping one, nor even unduly set upon what is miscalled 'the main chance'—as though that could be 'chance' which every man may acquire for himself, if he be prudent or roguish enough; or as if that chance were 'the main' one in which self is alone concerned! No, it was not on his own account that his heart leaped within him at the sight of that golden store, but because it reminded him of one with whom he could instantly share it.

He untied his little bundle, and took from it pen and paper; and standing beside the mantelpiece—for the *attic did not* boast a table—wrote, in a good clerkly

hand—Mistress Mulvaney having kept her word as to the ink-bottle—the following letter:

My darling Lizzy—Little did I think, when I bade you good-bye last night, that I should have great news to tell you so soon. I have met with a kind friend—whose name, for the present, you must be content to guess at, since he has reasons for its concealment—and I am in hopes he will put me in the way of making my living. I cannot even give you my present address, for he is not at hand to give me leave to do so; and, besides, whether I shall be here even to-morrow is more than doubtful. You are too sensible, I know, to fret, when I tell you that I am going abroad—an uncertain word, you will say, and yet I have nothing to tell you more distinctly—a great way off, my darling—beyond seas. Well, that was my own wish, you know. Step-father was seldom right in word or deed as respected me, but he spoke truth (I feel) when he used to say that England was no place for a young fellow who would make his way in the world quickly; and I have the sweetest reason—have I not?—to make it quickly. I shall write to you whenever I can. I shall think of you always—of the long summer days (that seemed so short) which we have spent together in the forest glades; I see them now in this place, where there is not a tree; I see the beech-wood by our lodge, with your red cloak glinting through their silver stems; I see the mighty elm in front of your cottage door, nodding to me, as though in farewell. I do not write thus to pain you, you may be sure, but to convince you that *I am* still with you in my thoughts. Enough of myself. *I conclude nothing* has occurred within these few hours

to you, though so much has happened to me. It was a comfort to remember that the wind would blow the elm away from your roof, not on it. You will be talking of nothing but the gale to-day—I mean your mother and James will be doing so. Then, about eleven (it is only seven o'clock when I write this), step-father will come in with the news that I have left home. Then you will look surprised (little hypocrite!), and your mother will weep, I know. God bless her! I fear there are hard times approaching for her. James will never get your poor father's place, unless he is more careful: I know he is suspected of poaching. It seems hard, in a land where so much is inherited, to have been left nothing but a taste, in which we are forbidden to indulge. If any opening should occur for him where I am going, I will let him know. I need not tell *you* to credit nothing that step-father says of me; but see your mother is not misled: I should be loath, indeed, to lose the good opinion of one who has been so kind to me. A time may come when I may repay it; and, Lizzy, darling, I believe it will. I noticed yesterday how thin her shawl was got: give her this sovereign, with my dear love, to buy her a warmer one this Christmas-tide. When she looks at it, she will remember me; and before the remembrance is worn out —who knows!—I may come home—I mean to *your* home—to remind her of myself in person. How did I get it? Well, never mind; it was honestly come by. And don't think that I need it. There has been already a drizzle of sovereigns upon me; and if it should come on to pour, in the tropics somewhere, I shall hold out my hat, turn up my umbrella (a palm-leaf) the wrong *way, and get thoroughly* soaked; then come back to

England to be dried. Since you may like to know where I have kissed this paper, I make a mark: I already feel your lips there, and tremble. How grown you will be when I see you next! but you will never be more beautiful in my eyes, for that is impossible. I have got your sampler, with *Trust in me* upon it. I do; I will: and believe me always, for my part, your loving sweetheart,

ROBERT CHESNEY.

I promised to tell you everything—even if it should not be good news, as you have promised to tell *me*. Well, my new friend has a companion, who is not pleasant—a sullen brute of a fellow, with whom I may have some trouble; even he, however, has his good point—an unreasoning attachment to his master, such as I have never seen, except in step-father's dog *Fang*.

Robert had the pen of a ready writer, but this note took him long to compose; he was permitted by the nature of the case to say so little about his own adventures; and when he wrote of Lizzy, he had a way of lingering lovingly over the words, and even (as we have seen) of kissing them, which prolonged the process. He had done at last, however; and having addressed the letter to 'Lizzy Alston, Green Lane Gate, Windsor Park,' was about to get it posted, when he found his door had been locked on the outside. There was no bell in the room; indeed, his habits did not lead him to look for such; and he began to shake the door-handle and kick the panel.

'Hush, hush, in Heaven's name!' said the landlady's voice through the keyhole.

'*I will not* hush,' was the lad's angry reply; 'I will

not be locked in, as though I were a spy and a liar.'

'Mr Murphy has gone out, and I suppose taken the key with him; he will be back soon, and shall open the door, I promise you. No honest lad shall be kept a prisoner in my house. In the mean time, what is it you want?'

'I want this letter posted.'

'Very good. Put it under the door.'

'Can I trust her?' thought Robert, hesitating.

'I will not deceive you, my good lad,' continued she, guessing the cause of the delay: 'I will put it into the box with my own hands.' She took the letter, and went down-stairs with it at once; as she did so, her eyes lit on the superscription, and a smile spread over her good-natured face. 'So he has a sweetheart, after all,' she murmured. 'What luck it is for her to have a lover as can write! It would be something, now that my poor dear Miles is with the saints, to have an ould letter or two in his own hand to keep by one; but I could never teach him even the capitals.—Lor, Mr Murphy, how you frightened me! What is it?'

'Nothin', sweetheart; only, I want that letter;' and suiting the action to the word, Mr Kavanagh's henchman snatched it from her, and retreated backwards, holding it behind him, into the smoking-room, from which he had suddenly emerged.

Mrs Mulvaney's face grew two shades nearer scarlet than heretofore. 'Bad scran to you, you thief!' cried she, following him quickly into the room. 'Give me up that letter. Sweetheart indeed! Your lips shall never touch Bridget Mulvaney's cheek again, if once you break that seal. I'll tell the young masther what *a mane sneak of a* foster-brother he has.'

'Tush, tush! it's for his sake I do it, woman. Yon lad is new to us all, and we know nothin' of him. The masther's in trouble—sore trouble, that I dare not speak of, even to yourself. How much less, then, should I trust a gossoon like that?'

'How came you to trust him at all, then?' inquired the widow incredulously. 'If he knows, he knows.'

'He knows something, and is in a position to tell it, which is more than he should have been if I had had my way: but you know what the young masther is—if he takes a fancy to man or woman, all's out'

'I believe the lad is as true as steel.'

'That's because you're a woman, and the young fellow is good-looking, like myself. Well, he may be steel, and yet, without knowing it, he may have written something here which would bring Frank Kavanagh to the gallows.'

'The gallows!' cried the widow, with a shudder. 'Is it as bad as that, Mr Murphy? and not a spy nor a gauger in all England to excuse the matter.'

'That is so, Mistress Mulvaney; and you had best ask me no more questions. The point is this: though the lad up yonder knows nothing of the trouble, he knows of something that happened afterwards to a couple of dirty policemen that followed us on horseback.'

'Ah, the blackguards!' ejaculated the widow; 'bad luck to them.'

'Well, they hadn't *good* luck, and that's a fact,' said Murphy grimly; 'and if the lad has chanced to mention *it to his* friends, they may put two and two together, *and find out* more than he has. Besides, in his pride *at staying at* a private hotel, he may have written

Mulvaney's at the top of the note, and it's very particular to keep our whereabouts dark for the present.'

'There's something in that,' assented the widow, won over, perhaps, no less by this complimentary reference to her establishment, than by his arguments. 'But you needn't have snatched the letter out of my hand like a footpad. Here; give it to me—for it's no more use to yourself than a mass-book to a monkey—and I'll read it out to you aloud.'

'You'll promise to read every word of it?' said Murphy, hesitating, and holding the letter high above his head; 'and not to hide anything, out of softness for the lad.'

'Yes, yes, I will,' answered the widow impatiently. Perhaps she was not altogether sorry thus to satisfy her own curiosity as to the contents of the young fellow's love letter, under compulsion and without twinge of conscience; and Murphy put it into her hand.

'Begorra, there's money in the seal!' cried she; 'and what a mane crature am I to meddle with it! He's sending his sweetheart a bit of gold, just as my Miles, when he was courting myself, once sent me half a sovereign on my birth-day, only it was stolen in the post. "My darling Lizzy," it begins, just as his did, saving my name was Bridget.—Now, Murphy, if there's anything particularly sweet in it, you must look another way, plaze, while I read it out. Now, silence, and be aisy, sir.' The last words had reference to a tender movement on the part of Mr Murphy, who had stolen his arm round her buxom waist, under the pretence (somewhat transparent, considering that he could not read) of commanding a full view of the letter. It was curious to watch the rapid change from excess of anger

to the height of good-humour in these late antagonists, and the mutual friendliness that had taken the place of what had so lately threatened to be a very pretty quarrel.

Little did I think, when I bade you good-bye last night, that I should have great news to tell you so soon.

'There, didn't I say he was going to tell, the sneaking spalpeen!' ejaculated Murphy.

I have met with a kind friend—whose name, for the present, you must be content to guess at—since he has reasons for its concealment.

'There, you see!' cried the widow triumphantly: 'if you did say he was agoing to tell, Dick, you was a liar.'

'Well, any way, he's set a woman to guess at it,' answered Murphy obstinately; 'and that's very nigh as bad as telling.'

I cannot even give you my present address, for he is not at hand to give me leave to do so.

'Come, what do you think of that, Murphy? Is he not the broth of a boy, and as true as I told you?'

'She'll be coming after him, and find it out,' argued the other, doubtfully. 'There was a Pagan woman as did that onst, from Palestine, as had no other address to go by beyond London. Nothing stops them.'

'Don't talk to me of your painted women, Mr Murphy.'

'Pagan, Misthress Mulvaney—Pagan,' explained Dick, apologetically. 'There's a song written about it, as the young masther sings.'

'Then he ought to be ashamed of himself, and you *for listening to* him. Listen to *this*, sir, and learn a *lesson in good* behaviour from yon poor lad. How

kindly he speaks of his Lizzy's mother as is old and poor.' And she read the extract out approvingly.

'Sure, she isn't his mother-in-law *yet*,' observed Mr Murphy cunningly, 'or he would not speak of her *that* way. Now, it's one of the many merits as would make *yourself* a blessing to any man, that your mother (rest her soul!) is with the saints, and'——

'Be quiet, Dick, with your flattery, and let me seal up the gold again, and put the poor lad's letter into the post.'

'You are deceiving me, Bridget,' cried Murphy, with sudden seriousness; 'I can see it in your eye; you've not read out all he says.'

'Well, it's just the postscript, Dick,' explained the widow, with well-affected reluctance. 'There's nothing about the masther in *that*, I do assure you.'

'I'm the best judge of that, Misthress Mulvaney, and I'll just tear the letter up from top to toe, unless I hear it; so, there.'

'Well, *I promised to tell you everything*, writes he.'

'Ay, now it's coming!' said Murphy grimly; 'them lads as has learned to write puts the main thing in their postscripts, like the girls themselves.'

I promised to tell you everything, even if it should not be good news. Well, my new friend (that's the young master, you know) *has a companion, who is not so pleasant—a sullen brute of a fellow* (this is *you*, Murphy), *with whom I may have some trouble.*

'Begorra, that's like enough!' ejaculated Dick, with a great oath.

'Hush, hush, ye hathen!' said the widow rebukefully; 'and only hear how he praises you afterwards.

'*Even he, however, has his good point* (there's for you),

—an unreasoning attachment to his master, such as I have never seen, except—except——'

'That's well, any ways,' exclaimed Murphy, complacently; 'and I'd like to know where he finds my equal in that respect.'

Except in step-father's dog Fang.

'The impudent young blackguard! does he say that?' exclaimed Murphy, scratching his shock head.

'Yes, indeed, he does, you omadhawn,' answered the widow, laughing heartily; 'and now you know what comes of prying into other folk's letters. It is you that have been listening to it all, and it's the listeners that never hear any good of themselves. Come, light me a candle, Mr Fang, while I get the sealing-wax, and try to mend what never ought to have been broken.'

Doubtless, Mrs Mulvaney well knew the man with whom she was dealing, or she would have abstained from thus reminding him of Robert Chesney's sarcasm, even if she had not concealed it from him altogether; but the fact was, that Murphy was rather pleased than otherwise with the testimony that had been paid to the *one* virtue on which he plumed himself —his fidelity—though illustrated by so homely a metaphor, and regarded its author with no increase of disfavour on account of it, but rather the reverse. A proof of this was immediately forthcoming in his giving up the key of Robert's attic to the widow, and bidding her tell him that (with the exception of the public room) he was free of the house, though forbidden to place his foot outside the door. This was not a great *range of liberty;* but unable, notwithstanding the *fatigues of the* previous night, to sleep, and tired of

remaining in his own apartment, without the solace of a single book, the young fellow was glad enough to take advantage of it. Without being by any means afraid of the sturdy Irishman, he would not have sought his society had it been avoidable, and, on descending to the smoke-room, it was a relief to his mind to find it empty. The time, however, hung very heavily on his hand; he was used to the free air of the forest and an outdoor life, and the sense of confinement was almost unbearable. Mrs Mulvaney's stock of literature was limited to a Prophetic Almanack, and a work of Catholic devotion in the Latin tongue; so that he had really nothing to do but watch the company in the coffee-room from behind the curtains of the glass-door. They were a motley crew, and ranged from the mechanic in the receipt of good wages, down to the linenless wight who was spending his last copper in a go of whiskey, but they were all of one type—that of Working (or pretending-to-work) Irish. They all seemed to know one another, and to be known to Mrs Mulvaney, who served them with her own hands, and had a word of friendly greeting for each of them.

She brought in Robert's own dinner at mid-day, but she did not dine with him; doubtless, Murphy had laid injunctions on her to the contrary. Later in the day, however, the former made his appearance, and, without any allusion to their previous disagreement, informed Chesney that he had seen Mr Kavanagh, who had made an appointment for them both to visit him on the ensuing day. Then Mrs Mulvaney joined them, and talked to Murphy about 'the boys,' whom, at first, Robert took to mean her children, but *afterwards* understood to be certain grown-up habitués

of the establishment who had come under his own notice that day. In the evening, some of them returned, and were spoken with apart by Murphy; they were all of the more poverty-stricken class, and seemed to regard that gentleman with great respect, and receive what he had to say to them with assent and gratitude. About eight o'clock a curious incident happened. Murphy, Mrs Mulvaney, and Robert were sitting at supper in the little room, when the hoarse voice of a broadsheet seller was heard in the street.

'There's news of some sort,' observed the widow. 'Listen!'

'It's nothing,' said Murphy roughly, and making an unnecessary clatter with his knife and fork. 'These fellows always tell a parcel of lies. If you were to buy his paper, it would be only money thrown away; there would be nothing in it.'

'Still, it can cost nothing to listen,' argued the widow. 'It's Murder. Hark!'

Her warning was unnecessary, for, urged either by an instinct of imitation, or by a curiosity that overwhelmed all other considerations, Murphy himself was now straining his ears to catch the fragmentary news.

'*Horrible murder—murder in Buckinghamshire—murder and 'cide—horseback—mounted policemen.*'

'What is it?' inquired Robert, rising eagerly from his chair. His ears were unused to the sing-song style of the street newsman, but the first words and the last had fallen on them distinctly enough.

'It is murder and suicide,' said the widow; 'but there was also something about folks on horseback. *Here are some coppers*: run out, my lad, and buy a *copy.*'

'Give them to me, and I'll buy it,' said Murphy, snatching at the money: 'a boy like that is sure to be made to pay twice as much as it is worth;' and he went out accordingly.

CHAPTER V.

TWO HUNDRED POUNDS REWARD.

It was some minutes before Mr Murphy returned, and when he did so, it was without the broadsheet, for which he said the man had charged such an exorbitant sum, that he refused to give it. At this, Mrs Mulvaney grumbled, observing, justly enough, that the extravagance would not have affected Mr Murphy's purse, but her own, while the broadsheet would have been a very entertaining piece of literature with which to beguile the evening. However, the very first thing in the morning she would buy the newspaper, where the authentic account of the transaction would be duly chronicled.

'That's if it ever occurred at all, Mrs Mulvaney,' said Murphy, with a short laugh, 'which is more than doubtful;' and at the same time Robert felt a significant pressure on his foot, as though a broad-wheeled waggon was passing over his toe, which certainly did not emanate from the lady of the house. The conversation here took another turn, and settled upon a subject very frequently discussed under that roof, namely, *emigration*. Many an Irish lad who left London for

the Far West, or the still farther antipodes, had taken his last meal (and that not seldom gratis) at *Mulvaney's*, and poured his hopes and fears into the ears of the friendly widow. Of only a very small minority of these she had ever heard again, but what she had heard, had given her a favourable impression of 'foreign parts,' which was her somewhat indefinite geographical expression for all countries that were not England or Ireland. She had therefore been always an upholder of emigration; while Murphy, who held a strong opinion not only that Ireland was for the Irish, but for no one else, and especially the English, had always opposed it. On this occasion, however, to her great surprise, and perhaps not a little to her disappointment, for she rather enjoyed an assault of arms with Dick, since it always ended in an embracing of them, her arguments met with small opposition. He allowed that there might be cases—of convenience, he would not say of compulsion—when it would be beneficial to leave his native land, and allowed that it would be somewhat hard upon the outside world—the inhabitants of which he seemed to look upon, like the Chinese, as barbarians—if it should never have the advantage of being leavened by a few specimens of Irishmen. On the subject of the national excellences, as compared with the merits of inferior races, it was indeed impossible that there should be disagreement between them; but there were little matters of detail on which they differed just sufficiently to give piquancy to the conversation. Mrs Mulvaney was of opinion that Irish folks should make their way in the world like other *people, but this* view Murphy strongly combated. *There were certain* chiefs of that noble race, such as

the young master, who had a natural right to land and goods, independently of inheritance—this was not quite clearly explained, but somehow 'the blood did it'—and again it was only natural that such as acknowledged the authority of the said chieftains should look to them for support. Robert Chesney, though a good scholar of the village-school pattern, knew nothing of political economy, and yet these opinions of Mr Murphy sounded hollow, or, at least, as though there was but little in them; but it was astonishing with what fire and fervour they were advocated. Every glass of whiskey that Mr Murphy swallowed—and he swallowed a good many—seemed to strengthen his conviction, though by no means to assist him in expressing it with perspicuity. If anybody had contradicted him, matters might have been very different, but as it was, he was affable and friendly. Every now and then he would wink at Robert with a sagacity that seemed the concentration of all the sense that remained in him, and which left him poor indeed.

'Come, Mr Murphy, you have had enough,' said the widow presently. 'Nay'—for he had made a snatch at the spirit-bottle, but not being in a condition favourable for the calculation of distance, missed it—'I am mistress here; and though I can't send you to bed like a child, though you are no wiser than a child, and deserve to be whipped, you shall have no more to drink;' with which she tucked the bottle under her arm, and triumphantly marched off.

'She thinks I'm dhrunk,' observed Mr Murphy confidentially, and winking more sagaciously than ever at his young friend.

'*I confess I*'—— Robert was about to add that

he himself had rather leaned to that opinion, when the other interrupted him impatiently:

'Tchut, lad; do you take Dick Murphy for a fool, that he should get dhrunk when he had a saycret to keep, and with a woman as he's sweet on in the room! No, no; it is not a few glasses of such poor stuff as that as could hurt me. I wanted to put her off the scent, that's all. She'll be thinking half the night, d'ye see, whether I've put my candle out, or under the bed, and wonder whether the house is on fire, instead of concerning herself about our affairs. If she had got hold of that broadsheet, there might have been the deuce to pay. Them patrols are dead, lad.'

'Good heavens!' ejaculated Robert, greatly shocked. 'And was that what the man was hallooing about?'

'Of course it was; and he was calling it *murder*, too; mind that.'

'It was a cruel and infamous act, anyway,' said the boy excitedly, 'that putting the tree across the road, just after yourself had been saved from the same peril, and I am glad I had no part in it.'

'Oh, *that's* your game, is it?' cried the other grimly. 'You think you are free of it, do you, while others have to pay the shot? Well, let me tell you, you're most infernally mistaken there. We're all in the same boat, we three. You're what they call an accessary after the fact. They've got your name in it all regular.'

'My name!' ejaculated Robert, in horror, his thoughts instantly flying to the cottage in the forest, and picturing Lizzy's face when she should come to *hear such tidings* of her lover. 'But no; that is impossible: you are lying to me.'

'Don't you use such hard words, my young fighting-cock, or you will get hard blows in answer,' said Murphy menacingly. 'If they haven't got your name, they've got your description as like as life. If the gallows bear fruit at all, it will bear three: two goodly Irish apples, that's me and the young masther (which the saints forbid!), and one little English crab, which is yourself. So, what I say is, be careful; lie snug as a mouse, and open your lips to nobody about what happened last night till you have put a thousand miles of salt sea between you and English land.'

Murphy waited for a moment, as if expecting a reply, but receiving none, gave a surly nod of his head by way of 'good-night,' and marched, not very steadily, out of the room. Robert listened mechanically to his heavy footsteps as they staggered up-stairs, and to the violent closing of his bed-room door. The news he had just heard had deprived him not only of speech, but of the power of rational reflection. Unlikely—impossible, indeed—as it was that he should be thus fatally associated, and above all so soon, with his companions of a few hours, he did not doubt it in the least; and the shock was overwhelming. Here seemed an end to all the bright prospects that he had so fondly pictured to himself, since he was to begin life, if not as a felon, still (what was as bad in the result) under the imputation of being one. If his name had really been mentioned — and here the ingenious Mr Murphy (through ignorance of the fanciful value which some people put upon their reputations) had been within a very little of precipitating the very catastrophe he would have averted—Robert would perhaps [redacted] straight to the nearest police-station and [redacted]

up, the better to clear himself hereafter. But since it was only his description that was thus advertised, might it not be well to take this ruffian's advice, and leave the country so soon as opportunity offered? Ignorant of all the methods of criminal procedure as he was, it struck him that if he could once escape from the clutches of the law, he would be safe; he was rapidly growing out of the boy, and in a few years recognition of his person—if only his name should not transpire—would be impossible. He was innocent, it is true; but it might be difficult to prove himself so, and especially without compromising his companions. To be sure, it was only Murphy that was really guilty of the crime in question; but he had passed his word to be silent concerning the night's doings, and, if possible, he would keep it. Any disclosure of them would moreover implicate Mr Kavanagh in that former proceeding—he did not know what it was, but could not but conclude that it was some transgression of the law—which had led up to the present catastrophe, and his feelings towards that gentleman were very warm and grateful. Upon the whole, therefore, and after long pondering, he decided to take Murphy's advice, though perfectly well aware that it had been dictated by the most unblushing selfishness; and somewhat relieved by having come to this conclusion, he dragged his weary limbs to bed and slept as only the young can sleep when trouble sits by the pillow.

With the first light of dawn, however, he awoke (not of himself, as it turned out, but probably at the opening of the street-door), and hearing a heavy footfall *in the silent street*, cautiously put aside the window-*blind, and looked* out. His first idea, rechauffeed [illegible]

what his imagination had fed upon the previous night, was that it was a policeman, for even rural officers of justice, with whom, of course, he was alone familiar, affect that pompous and measured tread, which, however assuring to the householder, is certainly premonitory to the thief; but it was not a policeman, and indeed might be said to be somebody very much the reverse, for it was Mr Richard Murphy. This gentleman, to whom the *vin ordinaire* of his native country might not only be said to be meat, drink, and clothing (for while imbibing it, he felt the lack of none of them), but also sleep, was standing in front of the house, with a smiling countenance, and *wiping his mouth with the back of his hand.* The morning was damp, and there was a slight drizzle falling, which perhaps was welcome to him, as reminding him of the weather in his native clime; at all events, it did not disturb him: he looked up the street and down the street with cheerful serenity, and was just about to add his contribution to the incense-breathing morn, by lighting a short black dudheen, when the onlooker saw his countenance fall, his tobacco-pouch drop from his hand, and the whole aspect of the man alter as suddenly and for the worse as though he had been shot in the stomach. Following the direction of his staring eyes, Robert beheld an announcement on the dead-wall opposite, which in his turn made him shudder from head to foot: *Murder —Two Hundred Pounds Reward—Frank Kavanagh.* These words were in large capitals; and before he could make out the rest of what was printed in smaller type, Murphy had rushed across the street, plucked the notice from the wall, and was tearing it to fragments. His fierce and vehement was the

involuntarily compared it, in his own mind, with the rage and fury of some wild beast whose young is threatened; and as he did so, he saw Murphy look quickly up at his window; it would have been easy to have dropped the corner of the blind, but some fascination forbade him to do so, and in an instant their eyes had met. Such a tigerish look came into Murphy's face, and so suddenly, as though bent upon some instant violence, did he rush in-doors, that the boy took up the only weapon that was at hand, the poker, convinced that within the next minute he would have to defend his life. This necessity, however, did not arrive. Murphy remained below, doubtless persuaded to do so by Mrs Mulvaney, whose voice, raised in passionate expostulation, could be distinctly heard. It was she, indeed, who had pointed out the notice to Dick's attention, or, unacquainted as he was with the art of reading, he would have remained in blissful ignorance of its existence, or concluded it to be a mere embellishment of the wall! And now it seemed she was impressing on him the futility, if not the wickedness, of endeavouring to make matters safe by proceeding to some fatal extremity. Robert discovered this by the simple method of opening his bed-room door and listening to the conversation, which, under the circumstances, he might well be excused for doing.

'He knows too much,' urged Murphy, with a growl like that of a wild beast ('And how like some wild beast,' thought Robert, 'such as the hunting-tiger, trained, but not tamed by man, of which he had heard tell, this Murphy was!'); 'he knows enough to hang *us.*'

'*No, no,*' rejoined the widow · then added something

the listener could not catch, but which seemed to carry weight with it. 'Moreover,' she continued, in tones still hushed, but not inaudible, 'you are not in your own land, remember; and by adding a new crime to the other, you will only increase the danger to the young master. You are out of your mind, Dick—and it isn't far you have to go for that—or I would say, besides, that none but a villain would think of murdering a poor lad like that because of a groundless suspicion of his fidelity.'

'Murthering! Mrs Mulvaney; you're joking,' returned Murphy, in tones of apparent good-humour. 'I was only going to put the innocent young fellow out of the risk of temptation. Two hundred pounds reward is a considerable attraction, and especially to one who wants to marry and set up housekeeping.'

'You ought to be ashamed to say so,' answered the widow, evidently resisting some personal attentions of her variable swain: 'any one who is really in love with a young woman is the last person to entertain thoughts of treachery; though, if he is only pretending to be so——Now, be aisy, and keep off, Mr Murphy.'

It was clear all danger to himself, for the present at least, was over; and Robert discreetly closed his door, and left the loving pair to conclude their love-passages without an eavesdropper. It was, indeed, with some little embarrassment that he presently descended into the sitting-room, to meet the man who, he had every reason to believe, had, but half an hour before, entertained the design of cutting [illegible]; but it was without fear. Boy as [illegible] easily [illegible]

Englishman, sound and wholesome; his intelligence was straightforward, without much imagination; and the outdoor life he had lived in the forest, both by night and day, had strengthened what had originally been far from sensitive nerves; moreover, he felt within himself a certain superiority over this wild, untutored savage that almost amounted to contempt. The other, however, had the advantage over him in one point. Whether from native cunning, or from some extraordinary shallowness of feeling, which permitted the most violent ebullitions of passion to pass away in a few minutes, and leave no trace, Mr Murphy seemed now entirely at his ease, and bade his young friend 'Good-morning!' in a tone that was almost genial. Mrs Mulvancy was as kind in her manner as ever, but was evidently depressed. Instead of being talkative as usual, she busied herself in preparing their breakfast, without a word; and sometimes, as though wrapt in thought, did not reply even when Murphy addressed her. In speaking of their proposed visit to Herne Street that morning, Dick observed: 'And unless you come with us—which, I suppose, can hardly be, misthress—you will scarce see the young masther yourself, before he sails.'

'I suppose not,' answered the widow coldly.

'Not but that he would come here himself, if it were safe, and bid you good-bye in person, you may be sure,' said Dick soothingly.

It was evident that he had mistaken the cause of her indifference, for she added sharply, 'I don't wish to see him, Mr Murphy, either here or elsewhere; but *least of all* in my own house.'

'*And* you say that, who were born within the

shadow of the ould masther's roof-tree, and have had bread from his hand!'

'Yes,' cried the widow firmly, 'I do say it. I wash my hands of him; and I wish he could wash his of'——

'Silence, woman!' ejaculated Murphy, with a savage oath. 'Stop that glib tongue of yours; unless, indeed,' added he bitterly, 'you wish to get the blood-money. Perhaps it is *that* which has made such a change in Bridget Mulvaney. English air by itself could never have done it.'

The widow's eyes flashed fire: it evidently cost her a great effort to stifle her feelings, and forbear from some cutting reply, but she succeeded. 'I am not going to argue with you, Richard Murphy, or rather with the devil that is in you. I only warn you, for your own sake and for another's, not to be so free of speech to your foes as you have been this day to one who was onst your friend.' With that she rose from her chair, not without some dignity, and keeping a calm, contemptuous face opposed to his scowling looks, walked slowly out of the room. At this, Mr Murphy's features became suddenly chopfallen, and he fell to scratching his head.

'A woman is a curious creature, lad, as you will find out for yourself some day,' observed he to his remaining companion. 'Now, one would almost think, if one did not know her, that Mrs Mulvaney yonder was downright vexed.'

Not having the advantage of a long acquaintance with the lady in question, Robert confessed that that impression had been produced upon his own mind.

'*But she wasn't*, though; or if she was, it's over

by this time,' explained the other. 'I own it was wrong in me to use such hard words, but a squeeze of her hand, or at most a chuck under the chin, will make her all right.'

Notwithstanding this confident speech, however, Mr Murphy did not attempt either of these experiments, nor, indeed, had he the opportunity of doing so, for when, after some hesitation, he ventured very gently to ring the bell, it was answered, not, as usual, by the widow, but by the maid-of-all-work, who quietly proceeded to remove the breakfast things.

'Missis' compliments,' said she, 'and if you should plaze to want anything, it is *me* as is to get it for you.'

At this, Mr Murphy looked rather thoughtful for a minute or two, and then, with the air of a man who has made up his mind on an important subject, chucked *her* under the chin, and bade her fetch the whiskey-bottle. 'When love is denied to us, lad,' observed he with pathos, 'there is nothing for it but to take to what is better—liquor.'

He took to it till about noon, and then informed his companion that the time had come to keep their appointment with the young master. Robert professed his readiness to accompany him; but when Murphy took his arm and would have passed it through his own, the lad drew back.

'I am no man's prisoner,' said he haughtily, 'and I either walk in freedom, or not at all.'

Murphy gave him one of his ugly looks, but perhaps reflecting that there was no time to spare just then for *having a quarrel* out (a pleasure which can always be *postponed*), he permitted him to have his way as far as

the nearest cab-stand, when he called a vehicle, and ordered the man to drive to Herne Street.

CHAPTER VI.

MR WILSON.

HERNE STREET is one of those short streets which run from the Strand to the river, and, like most of its fellows, has a disused and melancholy air. There is little or no traffic in it; there are no shops; it is composed wholly of lodging-houses, and a few mouldy-looking hotels. At the river-end of the street, the card 'Apartments' no longer figures in the parlour-windows; but on each side of the doors, which usually stand open, are painted the names of the different tenants, the houses being let in flats. At one of these doors the cab stopped and Murphy and his companion alighted. As they passed in without knocking, Robert's eye was at once attracted to the names, among which it naturally looked for that of Kavanagh; he was surprised to find it absent. They went up a stone staircase—very dirty, as common staircases are apt to be—and only stopped where the stairs stopped—at the third floor, and opposite a door with Mr Wilson painted on it. Murphy knocked, and a strange voice bade them come in.

Seated at a round table in a somewhat lofty room was a gray-haired old gentleman, pale, and with dark *rings under his* eyes, examining attentively a huge

map spread out before him. So absorbed was he in this task, that he did but give a single glance towards his visitors, and then motioning with his hand towards a couple of chairs, resumed his occupation. Robert was not sorry for this, because it enabled him to at once indulge his curiosity, which was greatly excited by the contents of the apartment, in which everything was strange to him, with the trifling exception of the smell of spirits, with which the habits of his step-father—even before his stay at Mrs Mulvaney's—had made him tolerably familiar. Considering that it was at the top of the house, the room was a lofty one, and hung from floor to ceiling with pictures; some of these were on canvas, though only one or two were framed, but the majority were on paper, pinned to the wall. The furniture consisted partly of pictures also, which, in various degrees of completion, lay about the chairs and tables, and even on the floor; a curious machine, which he rightly concluded to be a painter's easel, though he had never before seen one, occupied a prominent place; and in two of the corners were life-size figures in armour, standing sentry-like over all this disarray. There was no carpet, nor even, to Robert's eyes—which were not exacting in that respect—much sign of comfort in the place at all; but the pictures and the armour attracted him mightily, as also did the stirring scene that presented itself outside the windows. These looked down immediately on the river, on which the noonday sun was shining, and on whose dusky, but sparkling bosom, a score of steamers and other craft were making their way with more or *less of* speed. He knew it for the Thames, else it *would have* been hard indeed to have identified the

river, with whose grassy banks and gleaming shallows he was so well acquainted, with this bustling and crowded stream. His own circumstances seemed to offer a parallel to it; for was it not difficult to recognize in himself, now launched on the great tide of life, and already in such strange company, the boy of four-and-twenty hours ago, who had had no knowledge of the world beyond the simple life of the forest and what he had read in books. As he mused thus, Murphy called to him sharply, 'Don't you hear Mr Denton speak to you, or are you bent on making him say everything twice over, and him so weak and ill, you omadhawn?'

Without bestowing a glance on Murphy, Robert respectfully apologized to the old gentleman for his inattention, and, in obedience to a sign from him, drew near his table.

'So you have quite made up your mind, I hear, young man,' said the stranger feebly, 'to leave this country, and take your chance with your new employer?'

'With Mr Kavanagh—yes, sir.'

'Be aisy, you fool,' growled Murphy, 'and leave gentlemen's names for themselves and their friends to use them.'

'Hush, hush!' said the old gentleman, turning round upon Dick severely, 'and don't *you* call people out of their names so freely. If I am not much mistaken in physiognomy this lad is no more fool and omadhawn than yourself—and that is Mr Frank's opinion.—The fact is, Robert Chesney, that just now Mr Kavanagh has reason to conceal his name, and it's *better not to mention* it. Indeed, he is at present con-

cealing *himself*, and that is why I am appointed his substitute to speak with you this morning. You see this map—here is England, look you, and there, on the other side of the world, is Australia. It takes months to go thither, and months to return—if one ever does return'—

'I beg your pardon, sir,' interrupted Robert, 'but I have thought of all that, and if so be as Mr'—

'Let us say Mr Frank only, or perhaps Mr Wilson would be better still,' suggested the old gentleman with a smile.

'Very good, sir. Then, if Mr Wilson is still of the same mind towards me as before, I do assure you I shall not go back from *my* word. I am quite ready to go with him to Australia, or anywhere else, and make myself useful in the way that was agreed upon. But I should like to tell some one—I mean I should wish to write before I start to some one'—

'Be quiet, Murphy,' cried Mr Denton, in answer to a growl of remonstrance from that gentleman: 'how *can* you make me raise my voice, when you know I am so unfitted to do so. The lad thoroughly understands he is to mention no names, and that is sufficient.—Yes, you may write of course, and tell her—for it is a "her," I suppose, eh?—that if she writes by return of post, under cover to Mr Denton, Lloyd Brothers, shipping-agent, Liverpool, you will get her reply before you start. Mr Wilson has instructed me to supply you with an outfit for the voyage, which will be accomplished in an emigrant vessel, and I am to tell you not to be astonished if he himself should not be on board *of her*. *Murphy* will be there, and myself, but'—

'*What! is not* Mr Frank to go with us?' inter-

rupted Robert. 'Nay, sir, then that alters all; for I took service with *him*, and with no one else. There is no love lost between this man'—here he pointed over his shoulder to Murphy—'and myself; and though I am sure you are most kind and fair-spoken, I feel no call to go with you to the end of the earth, as I do with Mr Kavanagh.'

'That is well and boldly said, Robert,' said Mr Denton, smiling, 'though it is not complimentary to me and Murphy. If you had been a little less hasty to express your sentiments, I should have added, that though Mr Frank would not be on board the ship at starting, he would join it before it got to sea.'

'That is quite another matter, sir,' answered Robert simply; 'and if it be so, I am at your service.'

'Very good; then that is settled. I have just a few words to speak to Murphy; and meanwhile here is the newspaper'—

An exclamation in Irish here broke from Murphy's lips, but in unmistakable tones of alarm and horror.

'That man is afraid of my reading something in the paper about Mr Frank,' observed Robert contemptuously, his cheeks glowing scarlet with indignation. 'He accused Mrs Mulvaney this morning of wanting to sell his master to the police for the two hundred pounds reward that is offered, so that I suppose I ought not to feel aggrieved that he suspects me of the like baseness; but you may tell Mr Frank that his secret is as safe with me as with yonder scowling Irishman. I did not approve of that deed which has brought his master into trouble; but I think there was some excuse for it, and, at all events, sooner than any harm should come to him *through my* means, I would cut my right [redacted]

Put the newspaper in your pocket, sir, for if you were to offer it to me now, I would not read it, nor shall I do so if the opportunity should occur again to-morrow. I have my own opinion, as I have said, about the mischance to the patrol, which, after all, was more Murphy's doing than his master's; but I don't want to hear the worst made out of it, and of Mr Frank, as is clear is done by their calling it *Wilful Murder!*'

'This lad must have Irish blood in his veins,' cried the old gentleman, regarding him with admiration. 'I can scarcely believe that one professing such meritorious sentiments can likewise turn his hand to what is useful, and keep accounts. See, here is a long list of poor fellows who are going out with us to the antipodes, and who do not get their passage for nothing, and also a rough estimate of what their kits will come to. Sit down yonder, and add me up the total.—And in the mean time, Dick—for all this talking has knocked me up—do you get out the whiskey, and let us drink success to the *Star of Erin* and her voyage. In three days' time'— Here there was a knock at the door. Murphy ran to it, and turned the key, then looked at Mr Denton significantly.

'It's Polly's knock,' whispered the latter, rising excitedly; 'I had wished to have been spared this.'

'No matter; it will be a good test,' returned the other encouragingly, in the same low tone. 'Let her see you, if it be but for a minute or two, and then pass into the bed-room, and so out.'

Here the knocking was repeated, and a female voice exclaimed through the key-hole plaintively, 'Let me *in, Frank.* I know you are there, for I hear your *voice.*'

'You are mistaken there, Miss Mary,' observed Murphy, unlocking the door, and admitting the would-be visitor. 'Mr Wilson is out, and when he will return is very uncertain.'

The new arrival was a young woman of considerable beauty, small but exquisitely shaped, and whose keen blue eyes and lavish wealth of rich brown hair seemed to recall to Robert some familiar face. If that were so, the recognition did not appear to be mutual. 'Who is *he?*' inquired the young woman, pointing without a trace of shyness at Chesney; then carrying her finger on towards Mr Denton, 'and *he?*'

'They are two of my master's friends, whom I had no particular orders to introduce to you, Miss Mary,' answered Murphy.

'They are here by appointment, then, and waiting for him. Well, I shall wait for him too.'

With that she unfastened the seal-skin cloak she wore, and sitting down with her back turned towards Murphy, put up her pretty feet upon the fender.

'You may stop, or go away, Miss Mary, just as you please'—

'Thank you,' interrupted she with sharp contempt; 'I shall take advantage of your gracious permission, and stop.'

'Well, that can only end in disappointment, miss. Mr Frank is away, miles away, and, as you have been already informed by his own hand, is not coming back again to-day, nor any day; so there.'

'Is this true, gentlemen?' cried the girl, rising suddenly from her chair, and looking from one to the other *appealingly*. 'I have no means of knowing

whether this man is telling me truth or not, Heaven help me!'

As Mr Denton did not even look towards her, but appeared more busily engaged with his map than ever, Robert thought himself called upon to reply. No man, with a heart in his bosom, looking on that pathetic, pleading face, could have refused to do so, and far less kind-hearted Robert Chesney, who, moreover, at once bethought him of one in the far-off forest glades, who might one day be praying for some longed-for news of him—in vain.

'Indeed, miss,' said he tenderly, 'I believe the man is telling you the truth. At least I came myself to-day to see Mr—Mr Wilson—and have failed in doing so. They told me he would not be here.'

'And is it true—you are young and kind, and have an honest face; you would not tell me a lie, I feel—that Frank—that Mr Wilson is going far away—abroad?'

'Indeed, miss, it is true.'

At these words the little creature seemed to shrink within herself, and dropping into her seat again, covered her eyes with her hands, to hide the tears that she could no longer restrain. Here Murphy touched Mr Denton on the shoulder, and that gentleman rose at once, and passing softly but quickly across the floor, opened the bed-room door and closed it behind him. The next moment the outer door of the bed-chamber was heard to open and a rapid step to descend the stairs.

'That's him—that is Frank's footstep!' exclaimed the girl, starting to her feet, and rushing to the door.

'It is not. It is only Mr Denton,' observed Murphy coldly. She ran out, however, to satisfy herself of

the fact by leaning over the banisters, and presently came back again, looking very tearful and excited.

'What have you done with him? Where is he?' asked she of Murphy. 'If you will not tell me where he is, at least tell me *how* he is?'

'Oh, he's well enough, so far as that goes,' answered Dick carelessly.

'He was *not* well when I saw him last, not looking like himself at all. He had some trouble on his mind—was going down upon some unpleasant business, he said, into the country; and that made him take to what is so bad for him, more than ever.'

'Rubbish!' returned Murphy contemptuously. 'If you mean whiskey, no Irishman was ever hurt by whiskey yet. If you mean weakness of another sort—a foolish passion for your pretty face, that's over.'

'You liar!' cried the girl, her moist eyes darting fire, her cheeks aflame; 'you wicked, cruel liar!' Murphy laughed contemptuously. '*You* pretend to love him, *you!*' she went on, with bitterness. 'It is you who are his worst enemy. You lead him on to drink. You flatter and encourage him whenever he is bent on what is wrong and dangerous. *You*—you will be his ruin!'

'Be quiet, vixen!' shouted Murphy. 'Keep a civil tongue in your head.—You won't? Then just you walk out of this room, and take my word for it, that it is the last time you ever see the inside of it.'

'I will not stir!' cried she defiantly. Robert knew her now; her face—generally resolute and scornful, as at present, but sometimes soft and pleading—was on half the pictures on the wall.

'*Then I will* put you out,' said Murphy sternly.

advanced towards her, holding out his huge hand menacingly. The expression of his face was so grim and fierce that she quailed before it.

'O Frank, O Frank!' exclaimed she with a passionate cry, 'why, why are you not here to strike him dead?'

The huge hand was almost on her wrist, and she, like some graceful animal fascinated by beast or reptile, standing motionless, save for the trembling of her limbs, before him, when Robert suddenly bounded between them, and whirling her light form towards one of the mailed sentinels of the apartment, snatched out his sword from its rusty scabbard, and brandished it in Murphy's face. 'I am not Mr Frank, miss,' cried he assuringly; 'but I *will* strike him dead, if he lays a finger on you; and let me tell him that if his master is the man I take him for, he will have an account to settle with him, for threatening a young lady under his own roof—like you.'

'A young lady!' echoed Murphy contemptuously; the allusion to his master doubtless checking the impulse he had at first entertained to rush in upon the lad, at all risks, and take summary vengeance on him for his interference. 'A pretty sort of a young lady, truly, though scarcely worth your fighting for, if you knew all. And if it comes to telling, suppose *I* were to tell the masther, that the last time I saw Miss Mary she was cuddled up in your arms, like *that*. Come, there is no need for tale-bearing, nor for quarrelling neither.' It was evident that Mr Murphy very much repented of what he had done, or had threatened to do, and that he *feared the consequences* of it. His tones, though gruff, *were conciliatory;* and his manner, like that of a bear

asking for buns on the top of a pole, was embarrassed, but propitiatory.

'I am not more given to tale-bearing than yourself,' said Robert, who had dropped his fair burden, not without a modest blush, at the other's innuendo; 'nor do I seek a quarrel. But I won't stand by and see a woman ill-treated by any man; and she shall stay here as long as she likes, unless Mr Frank gives orders to the contrary.'

'*She* may stay, and *you* may stay, for all I care,' replied Murphy carelessly; 'but I have business elsewhere.' With that, he left the room, and passed down-stairs as far as the front-door, but did not cross the threshold. His business was twofold—to see that Chesney did not leave the house without him, and that his master did not enter it while Miss Mary remained within.

In the mean time, Robert began to feel a little awkward. When a knight-errant of the good old times had preserved an innocent damsel from a giant, he made no more ado about putting her behind him on his horse's crupper, as his own lawful prize, than if she were a sack of corn. But this chivalrous lad had no horse; and his affections, as we are aware, were already bespoken by another young person.

'I am very, very much obliged to you,' said Miss Mary, forcing a smile, and holding out a pretty little hand. 'I hope I may not be the cause of making that hateful man your enemy.'

'Don't you trouble yourself about me,' returned he good-naturedly; 'the only thing that gives me sorrow is to see you so cast down and sad. As for *Murphy, he was no friend of mine be*[redacted]

'And yet you dared to anger him,' said she gratefully, 'to save me from insult—*me*, whom he would have you believe was a worthless, wicked girl! But though I am no young lady, as you called me, I am not *that*, indeed, sir.'

Robert knew he was getting very red indeed. He was burning to express his conviction that Miss Mary was everything that she ought to be, but he couldn't get out a word.

'The fact is,' continued his companion frankly, 'I'm a model.'

'Indeed!' said Robert simply, endeavouring not to appear surprised at this announcement, which, nevertheless, was a little unexpected. He had heard of a model of propriety, but he had never before seen one, and the reality fell short of his ideal.

'O yes; I'm *there*, and *there*, and *there*,' she said, pointing to various pictures, in which her lively features had been reproduced with more or less of success. 'There was a time when Mr Frank was never tired of painting me; but all that's over now, it seems.'

She sighed so pitifully, that Robert would have given all he had to have been able to say a word of comfort; but he had none to give. Simple as he was, he guessed that the relation between his master and this fair young creature had been a tender one, and was now broken off for ever. 'Is Mr Frank a painter, then?' inquired he.

'Yes; an amateur one, at least. What! did you not know that? You cannot, then, have known him long.'

'I met him for the first time,' he was about to say, '*the night* before last,' but he stopped himself; that *might be saying* too much, perhaps. This girl could

scarcely be in Mr Kavanagh's confidence, when she did not even know him by his real name, but called him Wilson. 'I met him for the first time quite lately.'

'And yet you must be intimate with him, to be admitted *here*,' said she.

'I have been taken into his service, miss, and am going ab'——

'Going abroad with him, you were about to say,' said the girl quickly. 'His letter told me truth, then!' She was silent for a little; then sinking her voice to a tone of deep feeling, went on, as though unconscious of her companion's presence: 'Well, well! I have no right to hinder him; no claim, alas! to accompany him. He would have said "Good-bye" with his own lips, I know, if he could have trusted himself to do so.'

'He wished to spare you pain,' suggested Robert sympathizingly.

'Ah, I see; he has wound himself into your heart already,' replied she sadly. 'Beware of him! Don't think I speak it in bitterness, and because he has deserted me; but take warning from one who knows him well, and loves him still, and whom it grieves to give it. Frank Wilson wears as kind a heart as yours; he has been kind to me—most kind—and treats me now as kindly as I deserve. But he is not himself at all times. Beware of him when his brow clouds, and his words flow free and fast; beware of him when the drink is in him, and Murphy is at his ear. He is mixed up with dangerous schemes; I know not what they are, but those who work them with him are low and villainous men, unlike himself—unlike, I trust, what you will ever be. I would go with him to-morrow to the end of the earth, if he [illegible]

I am blind upon my own account, I can see on yours. Again I say, beware of him.—Good-bye, boy; and a thousand thanks.' She held her hand out for the second time, which he took and pressed. Then giving one last look around the familiar walls, as though to bid them farewell, she left the room, and ran downstairs.

CHAPTER VII.

IN CHARGE.

WHILE Robert was still hesitating whether to remain where he was, alone, or to return to Mulvaney's, Murphy re-appeared, and bade him accompany him into the town to procure his outfit, for which Mr Denton had provided the means. The warning which he had just received respecting the danger of the connection he was thus about to form, was still ringing in his ears, and had not been without its effect; it had manifestly been given out of gratitude to himself, and not at all with any desire to prejudice him against his would-be benefactor; and, moreover, the very fact of Kavanagh's having concealed his own name (as he had manifestly done) from one on such intimate relations with him as 'Miss Mary' was no small a corroboration of her words. If he was 'Mr Wilson' to *her*, it was pretty *certain that* he had very valid reasons for adopting an *alias as respected* others; and an alias, as even Rob[illegible]

was aware, is not ordinarily used except by persons who are at odds with the law of the land. On the other hand, from certain obscure hints, and more openly-expressed sentiments, which he had heard both from Murphy and Mrs Mulvaney, he had reason to believe that the offences, if any, which Mr Kavanagh had committed, were of a political character, connected with some discontented faction in Ireland; and he was not inclined to judge him harshly upon that account. To be a strong politician, one needs to be a wise man or a fool; and though Robert could not at present lay claim to the former designation, he was far removed from the latter. Moreover, he had taken a liking to Kavanagh, and personal attraction would have had force enough in his case (as it has with most men) to have overcome the repulsion of political disagreement, even had it existed. Lastly, but by no means least in weight, was the reflection, that if he should decline what good Fortune now offered to him, he might starve before the next turn of her wheel. He had absolutely no other means of livelihood, and the share he had already taken in Kavanagh's affairs might seriously affect his procuring any. In accepting this outfit at his hands, he felt he was taking the most decisive step that life had yet presented to him, and it might well give him pause. In the end, however, he did accept it; and what seemed to him a most ample supply of clothes and other necessaries into the bargain.

The sense of his having thus thrown in his lot with his new master seemed also to extend to his companion. Murphy's manner towards him at once changed for the better, and he became communicative, if not [illegible] informed him that [illegible]

going to take a good many of 'his people' with him to foreign parts, including some of 'the boys' from Mulvaney's; and that these last were to be put for the present under Robert's personal supervision.

'Here is the money out of which you are to pay for their keep in town, and their passage to Liverpool, and for which you will be accountable to the young masther. And there are tools, such as emigrants use, and seeds to buy, and even ready-made houses, the estimates for which you will make out at home from papers that I shall give you.'

If Murphy's master had been the most calculating man alive instead of the most impulsive, he could never have hit upon a better plan to insure the zeal and fidelity of his new adherent. To be trusted with money and the conduct of affairs was a compliment that a young man of Robert's character thoroughly appreciated; while his simplicity did not permit him to perceive that the work thus provided for him at Mrs Mulvaney's would have the effect of keeping him well employed and close within-doors. Indeed, when Murphy added a hint—very different from his former imperative injunctions—as to the inexpediency of appearing in public, his young companion took it in excellent part, and assured him that he considered his previous promise to keep himself concealed was still binding. From all which we may gather, that while Robert and 'Miss Mary' were having their private interview above-stairs, Mr Murphy had once more met Mr Denton below, and had received from him instructions which had the same force as though they *had come from* the 'young masther' in person.

For the remainder of his stay at Mulvaney's, which

extended for several days, Robert could no more complain of finding time heavy on his hands. The accounts which he had to deal with were really upon an extensive scale, and demanded his best attention, and when he was not engaged with them, the specimens of humanity placed under his control afforded him occupation of another sort. From the observations that he had formerly taken of these through the parlour-window, he had set them down as being at once both shy and suspicious; but as soon as they understood from Murphy the powers that had been delegated to his young companion, they at once threw off that character, and towards himself at least became all artlessness and candour. From them, indeed, he learned far more of their own affairs, and of those of his employer, than perhaps the latter had bargained for. Mr Frank Kavanagh was, it seemed, the proprietor of a large estate in Tipperary, and had been mixed up with certain illegal proceedings which these gentlemen euphoniously termed 'the Troubles.' He was beloved by his tenants, or, at all events, by the poorer portion of them; and having failed in some experiment he had attempted, or caused others to attempt, for their benefit—which Robert could not but suspect was no less than a revolution—was now assisting them to emigrate. He had, on the other hand, a younger brother, Louis, who was obnoxious to them, and of whom they never spoke without the preparatory ceremony of spitting on the floor. It was a shame and disgrace to the country, and indeed to the administration of the universe, that such things should be, but, somehow or other, Mr Frank had been ousted from his property, or at all events a portion of it, by Mr Louis, who was [redacted]

notwithstanding the good blood that ran in his veins, but so it was; and now, disgusted with this side of the world, the young masther had resolved to push his fortune in the other. What that fortune might be, they did not care to speculate upon, so long as they were permitted to share it; while of the voyage before them, as well as of the place—Australia—to which they were bound, they had the most inaccurate notions.

To begin with, they believed that they would only be at sea for a day or two, and that the world was quite flat. Robert, on his part, told them what he knew respecting these matters, but they took very little interest in them. They were chiefly solicitous to learn where the young masther was, and what he was doing; about which he had no information to give them: he told them, however, that Mr Kavanagh was not to be on board the ship at first, but would join them somewhere, after it had set sail; at which news they seemed to be as surprised as he had been himself, and somewhat cast down. Of his agent, Mr Denton, they had not so much as heard, they said; but Murphy appeared to be a great favourite with them, and held in much respect, as being foster-brother to the young masther. Mrs Mulvaney, too, was as good a soul as ever Ould Ireland, so prolific in excellent persons, had ever produced. It could not be denied that Robert's new friends were grossly ignorant, devoted as much to liquor as to patriotism, dirty in their habits, dependent in their ideas, and so far affording as strong a contrast to his own character as could be imagined; but they had, nevertheless, some admirable qualities of their own, which made themselves at least equally apparent, and on the whole, he liked them very well. They were

faithful, grateful, trustful, and, as is only possible with Irishmen, contrived somehow, without having anything to bestow, to exhibit an extraordinary generosity to one another. They were full of good-humour, too, and fun, the latter being sometimes of such an uproarious description as to demand the personal interference of the widow, who, on such occasions, did not hesitate to put it down, very literally, with the strong hand. To this domestic police they were submissive enough; and perhaps Mrs Mulvaney's method of dealing with 'these children of a larger growth' might have been, in some respects, imitated with advantage by some very superior authorities. Her behaviour towards Robert himself, though uniformly kind and pleasant, was not what it had been; nor was she on the same familiar footing with Murphy as before their quarrel. To the latter, indeed, her manner had become quite stiff and formal; while to Robert it was only reticent, and not unmingled, as it struck him, with a sort of silent pity.

Whatever she may have had in her mind, however, respecting him or the service on which he had entered, she kept to herself; and when the morning came on which he left her roof—in charge of some half-dozen of 'the boys'—for Liverpool, she kissed him (as she did all the rest), and bade him God-speed; and so they parted. There was, nevertheless, a certain doubtful trembling, in her honest voice, as she spoke that farewell, which did not escape Robert Chesney's notice, and somehow recalled to him the warning that he had received in Herne Street, from lips more fair, but not more friendly. It was much too late, however, even if he had wished to do so, to recede from what he had [illegible] the ch[illegible]

recurred to him afterwards, he forgot it in the incidents of the journey; while, on his arrival at Liverpool, where he reported himself at Lloyd Brothers, according to instructions, he found a letter awaiting him from Lizzy, the contents of which, together with the duties that devolved upon him with respect to the emigrants, gave him plenty of other occupation for his thoughts. Mrs Alston, always in delicate health, had fallen ill, dangerously so, as he could read through poor Lizzy's transparent expressions of hope—and there was bad news, in another way, of James. The latter was a somewhat morose-tempered lad, easily led where dissipation was in view, and of idle habits. Brought up to assist his father in his duties as game-keeper, he had contracted a taste for sport, which he was not now in a position to gratify without the most serious risks, though placed amid the greatest temptations to do so. Disappointed in the hope of succeeding to his father's post, and doing only occasional work for a neighbouring farmer, he lived on at the old place, where the hares started under his feet, and the pheasants whirred about his ears, with more spare time on his hands than was good for him, and not without acquaintances to point out how profitably he might spend it. In a word, he had taken to poaching, a pursuit which in his case could not long escape detection. Nay, by one person at least it had already been detected; and herein lay for Robert Chesney the bitterest news of all. The man who had discovered the crime was John Rowland, his own step-father, and the use he was making of his knowledge was to endeavour to win Lizzy for himself. Robert could see that, though Lizzy at present could not. She only spoke of Mr Rowland's forbearance in having

spared her brother for her sake, and of his unlooked-for forethought in not having revealed the delinquency to her mother, upon whom such a discovery might just now have had fatal effects.

To be poor, alas! is often to be powerless, and Robert could do no more than warn the innocent girl against the wiles of one whom he himself knew far too well to believe capable of a disinterested act of benevolence. Lizzy's letter had indeed unwittingly corroborated for him certain suspicions of his step-father that had already rendered him uneasy upon her account, and which now went nigh to madden him. Rowland had always disliked him; but of late months his conduct had been so systematically cruel, that he had found it hard to explain it, save on one ground—that of jealousy; and it now occurred to him that his running away from home was the very object that this man had desired, and that his brutal behaviour might even have been in part assumed, in order to obtain that end.

Outraged, outwitted, but also a penniless outcast, what could he do, beyond putting the unsuspecting girl upon her guard. When he went on board the ship, and found it crowded, not with men only, but their wives and daughters, how he longed to have had the means at his disposal to have offered the Alstons a passage to the New World; if he could have had his Lizzy with him, safe alike from poverty and persecution, how light of heart, how strong of hope would he not have been! So enraptured, indeed, was he with this idea, that, forgetful of her mother's illness, and of the impossibility of the ship being delayed, if at that moment he could have seen his patron, he would have [redacted] him, not-[redacted] obligation he [redacted]dy.

under to him, to assist him still further in this strait. But fortunately for his reputation for sanity, Mr Frank was not at hand; Murphy even protested that he did not know where he was, and if so, it was certain that none else knew. His absence entailed upon Robert additional duties, which were so far welcome, that they prevented his mind from dwelling on its own sorrow.

CHAPTER VIII.

OUTWARD BOUND.

THERE were more than two hundred emigrants of both sexes and all ages, though mostly adults, on board the ship, and out of these about sixty came from Mr Kavanagh's estate, and had their expenses wholly or in part defrayed by him. These were for the most part as ignorant and helpless as the contingent Robert had brought with him from town, and he had the supervision of them all; to supplement their too scanty outfits, or in the rare cases when they had a little money of their own, to restrain them from purchasing unnecessary articles, was only a small portion of his task, which extended from keeping their accounts to locating them in their respective berths. Mr Denton was ill, much worse, to all appearance, than when Robert had met him in town, and was recommended by the doctors not to go on board until the last moment; and Murphy, *from his ignorance*, and bad example as respected indulgence in drink, was worse than useless as a coadju-

tor. One man only was of help to Robert—a weather-beaten, wiry old fellow of sixty years of age or so, whom 'the boys' called Mister Maguire. The 'Maguire' was open to little question, but the reason of the 'Mister' was by no means self-evident. Except that he had a more intelligent air, his appearance in no way differed from that of his fellow-emigrants; and he shared bunk and board with them in the steerage, and was treated in all respects like the rest. But among 'the boys' themselves it was very different; he was evidently held by them in higher consideration than Murphy, notwithstanding that that gentleman enjoyed (as did Robert likewise) the privilege of a second-class berth, and his suggestions rarely failed to command obedience, even from the most unreasonable. His assistance, therefore, was invaluable to one whose delegated authority—in the absence of him who had bestowed it—would not otherwise, perhaps, have had much weight; and moreover, in matters relating to ship-board—of which, of course, Robert knew nothing—he was thoroughly at home: it was pretty certain, indeed, although he did not parade the fact, that at one time in his life, at least, Mr Maguire had been a sailor. It was not till they had been at Liverpool a week that all was ready for sailing (for the ship being for emigrants only, awaited the convenience of her passengers), and Mr Denton came on board. He looked very white and ill, and was carried up the side on a sort of litter, and at once conveyed to his own cabin. That of Mr Kavanagh still stood empty, and the only tidings of him were as vague as before—that he 'would join them somewhere on the voyage.'

On a certain Saturday morning, the ti[illegible]

and the wind being favourable, the anchor was weighed, and the ship set sail. A few minutes after she began to move, a large black boat shot out from one of the docks ahead of them, and pulled straight for the vessel.

'What is that?' asked Robert, who was standing on the forecastle, of Maguire, who stood beside him.

'That's the police galley,' returned he with a crooked smile, which might, however, have been caused by his having his pipe in his mouth. 'I only wish I was the steersman.'

'Why?' inquired Robert simply.

'Because, with this free wind and some unskilful handling of the wheel, there might be a lucky accident.'

It was impossible, from his sarcastic tone, as well as from the truculent expression of his eyes, to doubt that what Mr Maguire intended to express was that he would have run her down. Robert had seen enough of his new companions to feel small surprise at any enmity they might exhibit towards the police authorities, whether on land or sea; still, his companion's views in that quarter did seem a little 'advanced,' considering the smallness of the provocation for them.

'Is it unusual, then,' asked he, 'for the police to board vessels at the last moment? They don't mean any particular harm to us, I suppose?'

'I never heard of their meaning any particular good,' returned the other grimly.

Robert himself began to feel uncomfortable; occupied with his own sorrows, and still more with his multifarious duties, he had almost forgotten the apprehensions under which he had laboured while at Mulvaney's, but at this moment all the incidents of that

night in which he had first made acquaintance with his present patron recurred to him. Kavanagh, indeed, was not on board, but he himself and Murphy were, and it was more than possible that it was on their account that this unwelcome visit was about to be paid. Without absolutely wishing that Mister Maguire was at the wheel, he regarded the approach of the galley with considerable anxiety as it drew nearer and nearer. Presently, it reached the ship; and a police inspector, accompanied by two men armed with pistol and cutlass, came on board. The captain was summoned, a written parchment handed to him; and then orders were given to slacken sail, and for all hands, except the women and children, to come on deck. The inspector, with the list of the passengers in his hand, first compared the numbers.

'There are two cabin passengers on the list,' observed he curtly.

'There are so,' replied the captain: 'one is Mr Denton, whom you will find below, ill in his cot; the other is Mr Kavanagh, not come on board.'

'That remains to be seen,' said the inspector significantly. 'I must search the ship, and then examine all here. See that no one leaves the deck. Where is this Mr Denton?' An officer of the vessel accompanied the inspector and one policeman below; the crew and passengers remained where they were; the latter, for the most part, excited and alarmed, and watching the guardian of the law as sheep regard a dog, whose intentions, notwithstanding his office, they cannot persuade themselves are friendly. Some wore a more dismayed aspect, as though they had particular cause for misgivings on their own account: and others,

menacing, as fear or hate had the upper hand. Murphy and Maguire alone, who stood apart by the bulwarks, seemed to take the whole affair as one of course. Yet, from what the latter had just observed to him, Robert knew that this was far from being the case, at least as regarded Maguire; both had their eyes fixed earnestly on the after-deck; and a look of intense relief, as Robert fancied, came over their countenances, when presently the three men appeared upon it, after their examination of the cabins. The rest of the ship was next thoroughly searched, and then commenced a personal examination of the astonished passengers. This was proceeded with after a very extraordinary fashion: every man had to take off his cap, while the inspector carefully passed his hand over the front of the head. When he came to Chesney, to the lad's great relief, he did not delay a second; nor did 'Mister Maguire' occupy much more of his attention: but he scrutinized Murphy very particularly. 'Is it a lock of my hair you're afther, sir?' inquired that gentleman, in a tone of gratified vanity that convulsed his hearers; it was so unlike him to indulge in badinage with the constabulary, that it was clear to Robert that something had put him into high good humour. Some of the emigrants, on the other hand, were inclined to resent this liberty thus taken with the forelocks, and one of them warned the officer at his peril not to touch one hair of his head. But here, again, Murphy turned the matter into mirth, by observing: 'Sure, Mike, and do you suppose the officer would do it if so be he hadn't got his gloves on?' Finally, the captain himself contributed his quota to the general amusement by taking off his cap and exhibiting a head almost

which he begged to offer to the consideration of the examiner. The search having thus proved fruitless, the inspector and his myrmidons took their leave, and the vessel, which had slackened sail in obedience to his orders, resumed her course.

Though cold, the weather was clear and bright, and the sea-air and sunshine rapidly restored Robert Chesney's spirits. He had the utmost confidence in Lizzy's fidelity to himself; and since all had been done in putting her on her guard that could be done, what use was there in dwelling on what might after all be an imaginary trouble. So Youth, with its practical good sense, can reason, while Age, bowed by sad experience, carries the burden in anticipation. He had an exemption, too, from another sort of trouble, from which youth has by no means a universal immunity: he never felt sea-sick, except when his duties called him to visit his charges in the steerage, which offered a scene that is, very literally, better imagined than described. Irishmen make good soldiers, but they are not good sailors—at least to begin with. Their wit died out of them, their sentimental regrets vanished; their pigs, their potatoes, their potheen, nay, patriotism itself, were all forgotten in the wretched excitement of that game of pitch-and-toss, in which their all, or what seemed their all, was lost twenty times a day. Even the absence of the young masther was for the time no longer commented upon by his unhappy adherents. On the other hand, it began to disturb Robert very much. To them the assurance that Mr Kavanagh would join them on the voyage, had been perfectly

[redacted] there were [redacted] ports be-

[redacted] which

they might touch, and behold him on the quay. But to one whose geographical knowledge was more accurate, matters began to look very suspicious. If the recent visit of the officers of justice had been foreseen, it was easy to understand why Mr Kavanagh had not put in an appearance; and Robert had judged it probable that he had embarked on board some fishing-smack, or other vessel, for the purpose of being picked up when the *Star of Erin* (as their own ship was named) had got some few miles down the Channel. But as time went on, and they began to near the open sea, this expectation grew less and less, till it faded altogether. He would have insisted upon an explanation from Mr Denton, but that that gentleman was reported to be mortally ill, and none but Murphy (out of whom he could get nothing but evasive replies) was admitted to his cabin. There was nothing for it, therefore, but to await as patiently as he could the course of events. He would certainly not have embarked on board the *Star of Erin* had he not believed that Mr Kavanagh was to have accompanied him; but after all, he had had his passage paid to the New World, and was even in receipt of a small salary as general manager for his patron's clients. In this capacity, indeed, he enjoyed a considerable consideration, not only with the emigrants, but even with the captain himself. They had been at sea nearly a week, and were out of sight of land, when that gentleman, being engaged on deck one evening, happened to request Robert to fetch for him some article out of his cabin. To obey this request, it was necessary to pass the door of Mr Denton's berth, and as he did so, he was surprised to hear from within it the sound of

laughter. It was Murphy's laugh to be sure, but it seemed strange that even Murphy should indulge in such hilarity at the bed-side of one supposed to be dangerously ill. On his return, not only was the sound renewed, but the cabin-door opened just as he was about to pass it, and out came both Murphy and Maguire, the former evidently in the highest spirits, the latter cold and quiet-looking as usual.

'I am glad Mr Denton is better,' observed Robert significantly. 'I hope there is now no reason why I should be denied admittance to him?'

'He's ill—he's very ill still,' began Murphy, becoming suddenly sedate and sad.

'Stuff and nonsense!' said Maguire contemptuously. 'Why keep up this farce, Dick, before Mr Chesney, who, after all, is one of ourselves?—Mr Denton can hardly be seen to-night, sir, being, in point of fact'——

'Under the influence of a sleeping-draught,' interrupted Murphy gravely.

'Just so,' continued Maguire; 'but if you require a plain answer to a plain question or two, I shall be happy to tell you all you want to know over a pipe on the foksale.'

Robert thought it strange enough that he should be thus referred to 'Mister Maguire' for an explanation of such importance, but he was too desirous of obtaining it to do aught than close with the offer. In a few minutes, the two were seated under shelter from the freshening breeze, each with a pipe in his mouth; they were quite alone, except for the watch—the emigrants being all in their bunks even at that com-

[redacted] hour; a thousand [redacted] shining [redacted]

was no other sound, save when a wave larger than common struck the vessel on her quarter, and made her shiver from stem to stern.

'Now, what is it you want to know, young man?' inquired Maguire.

'I want to know several things,' replied Robert, piqued by his companion's tone, and also, perhaps, by the reflection that a confidence had been reposed in him which had been denied to himself. 'Firstly, why have I been told by Mr Denton that Mr Kavanagh, my employer, was to join us on our voyage, when that was not the case?'

'Let us confine ourselves to facts,' replied the other, puffing slowly at his pipe. 'Leave out "when that was not the case," and the answer is easy: Mr Kavanagh is on board the ship at this present moment.'

CHAPTER IX.

THE CABIN PASSENGERS.

'Mr Kavanagh on board! That is incredible,' exclaimed Robert.

'I can't help *that*,' returned Maguire; 'I can only repeat that it is the fact. I saw him with my own eyes to-day. I think I may even promise that you shall see him with yours to-morrow.'

'*But the* police'—— commenced Chesney.

'*Oh!* you believe in the police, do you?'

rupted the other contemptuously, 'and yet talk of things being "incredible." For my part, I have been in a ship before in which there was "one too many" on board, and that was "the devil" himself. The present incident, therefore, sinks into insignificance.'

It was certain that Mr Maguire was not joking; he never did joke, after the fashion of his compatriots, but used a certain staidness of speech and manner, sometimes, as in the case of the police galleys, diversified by ferocity.

'You are wondering who I am, young fellow,' continued he, 'and since I have promised to satisfy a reasonable curiosity, I will tell you. I would not tell everybody, mind you (nor even you, for that matter, if we were not well out in the blue water); but you are a lad of spirit, and I like you. With your wits and pluck, you would make a figure in the world, if it was not for your slavish respect for people in high places.'

'I was not aware that I entertained a slavish respect for any man,' answered Robert, somewhat haughtily, for his youthful pride was touched.

'Nevertheless, it is so,' continued Maguire coolly. 'You are frightened at the very shadow of so-called authority; any Jack in office has only to cry out, "In the king's name," and you dare not lift your voice against him, far less your finger. Yet kings, and such-like, would have no existence but for the dulness of mankind. It pleases the great mass of the world to make-believe to worship stupidity, and to exalt it above independence and energy; for then, let the clever fellows do their best, they can never get to the top of [redacted] tree.'

'I think I see what you mean,' said Robert thoughtfully; 'yet what is the feeling towards the young master, as they call him, by which our friends down yonder'—he pointed to the deck below—'are actuated, but this same worship of an accidental distinction? What is the possession of "the old blood" but an accident of birth?'

'Quite true, my young friend. You might have even added (had you known it), "How is it that you yourself are called 'Mister Maguire,' when there is no difference of present fortune between yourself and the poorest of your companions, but only that once upon a time your father held a bit of the land which he inherited by no merit of his own?" Well, the explanation of it is easy: these poor fellows are a parcel of fools.'

'Perhaps,' observed Robert, shrugging his shoulders; 'still, there must be something in it. Murphy for instance, would lay down his life for the young master.'

'Very true; but that is because Murphy is *the* greatest fool of them all. Now, *I* like "the young masther," as they call him, too, and would go as far to serve him, perhaps, as any of his poor besotted idolaters; but then I like him for his own sake. He is a fine fellow, and might have gone far even in his own country at one time, only luck was against him. Now, Murphy would admire him just the same if he were a miser or a coward, such as Louis was.—By-the-by'—here the speaker looked at his companion with great significance—'do you know about Louis?'

'I think I have heard it said that he was dead,' said Robert, 'that is all.'

'*Ah, well;* then that is enough. We are already

getting out of our reckoning. I promised to tell you something of my own life, which has nothing to do with Mr Louis Kavanagh's death, poor devil.—My father was a squireen in Tipperary, as his fathers had been before him for many a generation. It was very creditable of them to go on succeeding their ancestors so regularly, and getting drunk in the same parlour with such assiduity; but life of that sort was too respectable for me, and on the occasion of a certain domestic difficulty (we were both wrong, and very drunk), I cut the paternal cable, and ran away to sea.—You ran away from home yourself, young fellow, did you not?'

'I did,' said Robert gravely; 'but it was to avoid my step-father's ill-treatment.'

'No apology is requisite to *me*, my lad,' said Maguire frankly. 'I like a lad that runs away from home. What are ease and comfort at that age, compared to independence?'

'Nay, pray do not imagine that I left them when I left *my* home,' explained Robert. 'It was but a cottage, and my step-father but a gamekeeper.'

'Then where did you learn your fine words and your good figuring?'

'At the village school. It seemed to me that learning was the only thing that could get me out of a condition that was very unpleasant, and so I worked hard at my books.'

'Ah, that's bad,' observed Mister Maguire deprecatingly. 'I don't mind a young fellow's learning to read and to write, and even a little arithmetic, which I have myself found useful at a pinch—but I am dead [illegible] *books.* They [illegible] ation. At this

moment, instead of saying to yourself, "Here is a man of spirit and experience, whose views must needs be worth something, and I'll follow his lead," you are wasting time in thinking about it. "Will it be prudent to do so?" is the idea that occurs to you, or even (if they taught you out of good books), "Will it be right?" Now, it is one excellent point in the character of our good friends below here, that they never think.'

Not a muscle of Mr Maguire's countenance moved, save those employed in the suction of his pipe. It was impossible to tell by the expression of his face whether he was in jest or in earnest. 'However, let me go on with my story,' he continued. 'I went to sea as a cabin-boy, and in twelve years' time—when I was seven-and-twenty—I found myself the captain of a ship. It was but a small one, indeed—a sloop called the *Mermaid*, with but very few hands on board, but I was proud enough of being her skipper: she was laden with oil from Barbadoes, and we had not long left the place, when we fell in with a strange sail. She showed no colours; and as she drew nearer, I made her out to be a schooner, full of hands all in white shirts, and with a whole tier of great guns.

'"*Where does this sloop belong to?*" hailed she.

'"*To London,*" said I; "*from Barbadoes.*"

'"*We know that,*" was the answer. "*Send your master on board.*"

'And a black flag flew up to her mast-head. That was thirty years ago, and yet I remember that moment as clearly as though it happened yesterday. One doesn't fall into the hands of pirates every day. Notwithstanding my alarm, I felt it hard to keep my temper (which was always short), when the

called out, as we were making the best haste we could in our little boat towards his ship: "*Pull faster, you speckled-shirted dogs* [as though we would not have worn white ones, if we had known of his preference for them], *or I will drub you within an inch of your lives, and that inch too.* But I knew better than to answer; for when your hand is in the lion's mouth, says the proverb, get it out as easy as you can. Only I made up my mind, that if the worst came to the worst, I would take that gentleman round the waist and jump into the sea with him, at any rate.

'"*And who are we, think you?*" said he, when I got upon deck.

'"*Sir,*" said I, "*I believe you are gentlemen of fortune belonging to the sea.*"

'"*Nay, there you lie,*" said he, "*for, by* ——, *we are pirates.*"

'For though, like most people in authority, he was inclined to give himself airs, this gentleman was very plain-spoken. He asked what I had on board my ship —warning me at the same time that a lie would cost me my life—and was very dissatisfied when I told him. It seemed to me, indeed, that the time had almost come for his taking that leap with me into the sea, the satisfaction of which I was fully resolved not to deny myself; but, fortunately for us both, it seemed he had not the absolute disposal of life and death in his own hands, but must needs consult the ship's company.

'In the mean time, I was sent down to his cabin to await the result of their deliberations. While there, one of his men came in, and with a friendly countenance, said, "So you don't know me, Mr Maguire?"

"No," said I [illegible] that pleasure."

'Then he reminded me that he had served in the same ship with me five years ago, as likewise two other of his companions had.

'"We three wish you well," said he; "but it is unfortunate that the *Mermaid* has so little in her, which makes the others bitter against you. Now, what we shall propose—since they are for shooting you—is to make you one of ourselves; for there is not a man on board of us who can keep accounts, which we know you can do. So I have come down to bid you have no hesitation, in case you get the chance of such an offer—not without risk to myself, let me tell you, but one should stand by an old shipmate."

'I thanked him heartily, and said, what was very true, though piracy was not to my taste, a bullet through the head was much less so; and in the end it turned out as he had given me to hope. I was made purser of the *Mother Carey*, as their vessel was called, that very night, and shook hands with the captain upon it (instead of kissing them, as when the king gives you anything), and with all the crew. Moreover, they brought in a huge bowl, made of solid silver, which held eight quarts of punch, and drank until sunrise to my new appointment—a most undesirable one, you are doubtless thinking, my friend, and so thought I at that time. With the exception of the three men that had saved my life, I had no desire to see any one of my present companions again, unless it should be at some place of execution; but one's opinion changes upon many things in this world, and I have been on board worse ships, and mated with worse crews, than that of *the Mother Carey*.'

'But how long *were* you on board of her, before you had an opportunity of escape?'

'Well, really,' said Maguire, sucking slowly at his pipe, and regarding Robert with a sort of comical grimness, 'I can't quite say as to the opportunity of escape, but I was with the *Mother Carey*—or, at all events, with her chickens, for she went to the bottom the next cruise—for about *twenty years*. But there, it's getting late, lad, and time to turn in, so I'll finish my yarn another time.' And with that he rose, knocked the ashes out of his pipe, and with a nod at his petrified young companion, descended gravely into the steerage.

Twenty years the companion of pirates! It was clear, even to the inexperience of Robert Chesney, that no man could be amongst such persons for such a length of time, and yet not of them. 'Misther Maguire,' then, who enjoyed such respect below-stairs, and with Murphy, and who even associated on familiar terms with Mr Denton himself, had been in his time 'a gentleman of fortune,' as he had delicately put it, 'belonging to the sea!' This was sufficiently astounding, of course, but it was not absolutely shocking to the feelings; for in the first place, the whole story might be untrue—'only a yarn,' as the narrator himself had termed it, spun to beguile an idle hour, or to impose upon his own (Robert's) credulity; and secondly, if it was true (and indeed he believed it to be so), the circumstance had happened so long ago, and was so much out of the pale of ordinary experience, that it was robbed of its more offensive features. Piracy, as Robert understood, was a thing of the [redacted] this strange fellow-

passenger of his must have been one of the very last of that now legendary race, whose hand was against every man, and every man's hand against them. This Maguire (who, moreover, had some good points about him—or, at all events, points that were attractive) was, after all, to be regarded more as some marine monster, so rare that it is more an object of curiosity than of loathing or alarm; or as some antediluvian animal, supposed to be extinct, whom nobody would now wish to destroy, even if it still was a little dangerous, but would rather preserve and make much of, as a solitary specimen of what had once existed.

What doubtless strengthened these liberal views in Robert, who was certainly not without good principles, was the powerful interest that the relation thus suddenly broken off had excited in him; he wanted, it must be confessed, to hear the conclusion of the matter. Moreover, the confidence that had thus been reposed in him —for it was reasonable to suppose that Maguire did not show everybody this strange leaf of his own history —was a compliment to his good sense as well as his sense of honour. It was evidently not expected that he should tell this wonderful story all over the ship, as many lads of his age would have hastened to have done. He did not see that what was a compliment to his prudence was paid at the expense of his sensitiveness to the claims of justice and authority; that it must also have not been expected that he would be so shocked at the revelation as to denounce the author of it. He lay awake half the night thinking of the *Mother Carey*, and dreamed of a 'speckled-shirted dog,' who was, however, *in his dream* but a retriever; and not until the morn- [redacted] —*so wholly* had the greater wonder ab[redacted]

lesser—did he remember what Maguire had told him of Kavanagh's presence on board the *Star of Erin*. If *that* was true it was only a few steps more of improbability to be surmounted to believe the strange story his companion had told about himself. The greeting that Maguire gave him the next morning was more brief and commonplace even than usual, being confined to a careless nod, so that at first Robert was inclined to think that the other had repented of his confidence of the previous evening. When noon had arrived without his receiving any communication, he got very impatient, and even irritable, for it struck him that he had been made the victim of a practical joke; but after dinner, Murphy came to him with the information that Mr Denton wished to see him on a matter of importance.

'He is better, then?' observed Robert, careful not to exhibit his own state of expectation—for though it was certain that Murphy must know any secret connected with his young master that Maguire knew, he thought it well to show himself worthy of the latter's confidence.

'Yes, he's better, but still in his berth; and the light hurts his eyes, so you must talk through the curtain.'

When Robert knocked at the cabin-door, it was certainly a stronger and more healthy voice that bade him 'come in' than he had expected to hear; and he found Mr Denton, though still confined to bed, very different in appearance from what he had expected. Not only was he far from looking like a sick man but lately *in extremis*, but even [illegible] when he had seen him in [illegible] Street.

'Sit down there, Robert,' said he, pointing to a seat beside his pillow, but separated from it by the curtain which was drawn round him, 'and tell me about the boys.'

Robert made his report; to which the other seemed to listen attentively, and then expressed his high approval of what he had done.

'With Mr Kavanagh away, and myself ill,' said he frankly, 'I don't know how we should have got on without you. I hope you find your own position comfortable on board, as I am sure it deserves to be?'

'Yes, thank you, sir.'

It seemed ungrateful to say to this kind old invalid, 'But the promise that you made to me has not been kept with respect to one thing—that Mr Frank was to come with us.'

'And did you write home, as I told you, and bid your pretty sweetheart reply to you at Liverpool?'

'I wrote home, sir, and got an answer,' replied Robert a little stiffly. Mr Denton was not his patron, and this light allusion to his Lizzie seemed unjustifiable. Moreover, there was a movement of the curtain which suggested that his companion might be laughing at him—rather heartily for a sick man.

'And what did the young woman say, Robert?'

'Well—she sent me but ill news, sir; but such as it was, it only concerns myself and her. If Mr Kavanagh had asked me, it would be different, but you must excuse——'

There was a chuckle from the bed; the curtain was drawn suddenly back, and, to Robert's intense astonishment, revealed Mr Frank Kavanagh himself, just as he had seen him on the morning after their

except that he had a smoking-cap on his head, which he wore, perhaps, by way of night-cap!

'There goes my scalp,' cried he, flinging the gray wig which had so long concealed his own curling locks, against the cabin wall, 'and Mr Denton with it, though, you see, he has kept his word with you, after all.'

Robert took the hand that was extended to him in all sincerity; he was delighted to find himself once more face to face with his friendly patron; but his prevailing idea was still that of astonishment at the means that had secured this incognito.

'So you were Mr Denton, were you, all along, sir, and Mr Wilson as well?'

'Yes,' returned Kavanagh gravely; the gay tone and the smiling look both vanished—swept away, as Robert judged, by the tender memory which the latter *alias* had evoked—'yes. There were reasons—political ones—why I lived in Herne Street, under a feigned name.'

'And when the police came on board they never found you out neither! You should have seen them on deck, sir, scrutinizing us all, and feeling the hair of our heads, though why they did that I cannot imagine.'

'Nor any one else, I should think,' said Kavanagh, forcing a laugh: 'they were not very sagacious, truly, but they were very civil. The inspector apologized for disturbing so confirmed an invalid as myself.—But enough of that: I wish to know of your own affairs, Robert. What of your sweetheart, and her ill news? Can she not reconcile herself to your leaving her, and [illegible] so long a [illegible], that is only to be

A sigh followed Kavanagh's words: Robert felt even more certain than before that what had so suddenly turned his impulsive patron's mirth to melancholy was the remembrance of pretty 'Miss Mary.'

'No, sir; it is worse than that;' and he told him of the troubles which Lizzie's letter had disclosed to him.

'Well, well,' said Kavanagh cheerfully, 'we need not be afraid that a good-looking lad like you will be cut out by your step-father; but the poverty and the poaching are real misfortunes. What a pity we could not have brought the whole family out with us.'

'Yes, indeed, sir; that is what I had in my mind when we were at Liverpool,' answered Robert. 'If I had known who you were, I think I should have plucked up courage to ask you that great favour, notwithstanding all the obligations '——

'Tush, tush!' interrupted the other kindly; 'don't talk of them. Without a treasurer and comptroller such as you have proved yourself to be, we could never have got on as we have. Even Murphy allows that. No, no; the debt is quite on the other side. As for your friends trying their luck in the New World, they can do that still; and it is much better that they should follow you when you have got settled somewhere, than help to swell the number of our incapables. If money is wanting for their passage, I will let you have it—advance it out of your salary, if you are too proud to take it as a gift. There, there; that is settled, so no more words about it.'

It was no longer a wonder to Robert that 'the *boys*' should have such reverence for their '*young masther*,' for he felt himself as though he could

laid down his life for his sake. It was not only gratitude which affected him; there was an indescribable charm in Kavanagh's tone and manner that was wholly removed from the lad's experience, and almost seemed to him to belong to a superior being; it was not patronage, and it was not friendship, but it had the grace of the one, and the tenderness of the other.

'Indeed, sir, you overwhelm me with kindness,' was all he could answer; 'and I only hope I may show myself'——

'Yes, yes, we shall always be good friends, Robert,' interrupted the other; 'I am sure of that. And now about the boys—I mean *my* boys. Are they under the belief that I have forsaken them, or have they more faith than some people I could mention?'

'Well, sir,' replied Robert apologetically, 'they are still too sick to be very urgent about anything else, and besides, they don't see why you should not step on board any day from some island or continent.'

Kavanagh laughed, but there was a touch of pity in the tone in which he replied, 'Ah! yes, that is likely enough. They know nothing but what the priest tells them, poor fellows!'—then added still more gravely, 'and perhaps the greatest proof of their simplicity is their belief in myself.'

Here, somewhat to Robert's relief—for Kavanagh's voice had sunk so low that his companion scarcely knew whether this last observation was intended for his ear or not—there was a knock at the cabin-door, and Murphy entered, which put an end to further confidential talk.

CHAPTER X.

THE CLOUDS GATHER.

THE next time Maguire met Robert, his quick eye detected a difference in the lad's expression. 'Ah!' said he, 'you have seen him, I perceive. Did I not tell you the truth?'

'Yes, indeed,' answered Robert. 'But you must allow there was some cause for incredulity. Surely, nothing could be more unlikely than the whole affair.'

'To *you*, perhaps not,' answered Maguire. 'But as for me, I am too old to be astonished at anything. Besides, I have seen a much stranger thing in the way of "keeping quiet" on board ship.'

'Then that must have been on board the *Mother Carey*,' said Robert, smiling.

'Well, lad, it was so.' He, too, smiled good-naturedly enough, for he saw that the lad was greedy to hear more of that adventure; and lighting his pipe, and sitting down under the bulwarks as before, proceeded to gratify him.

'The story of my life would weary you, and, besides, some of its incidents might prove a trifle too strong for your stomach. But what we have just been saying, *reminds me of* a curious circumstance. While I was *perforce* a member of the pirate crew, they met with

some hard knocks, for it is not every ship that gives up to the black flag without a tussle; and next to Captain Grim himself (as he was termed, for neither he nor his men were particular about preserving their real names), the greatest fire-eater amongst them was a good-looking young fellow called Galley. He was not a general favourite, because he kept himself to himself, and did not drink much; but his bravery made him respected. I well remember his resenting some innuendos of the mate, with respect to his sparing the punch in order that he might win at cards, one night, by throwing the whole bowl of liquor over him, and the duel that took place in consequence. When any of the crew quarrelled, it was not permitted to fight on board, but they were put on the first land we came to, and there settled the matter with sword or pistol. The way in which young Galley polished off the mate with the sharp steel in half-a-dozen cuts, was a very pretty sight, nor have I ever seen a man of his age so dexterous with that weapon. Whenever we met a bigger ship than we liked the look of, and it was a question of flight or fight, he was always for fighting; and sometimes, when we have been chatting together, just as you and I are now, he would express himself with respect to his own trade in the most truculent manner. Being only a sort of amateur myself, I was allowed to have my own opinion about piracy, and I ventured to tell him that it seemed to me to be an unsatisfactory sort of life, especially as it had for the most part a noose of rope at the end of it. "And quite right too," said he: "if it were not for hanging us pretty fellows, every cowardly scoundrel would turn pirate, and *so infest* the seas that men of courage *would starve.* The ocean would be crowded with

rogues, like the land, and no merchant would dare venture out, so that our trade would no longer be worth the following." Well, when the *Mother Carey* came to grief, and her chickens were lodged in jail, previously to having their necks wrung, an appeal was made to the court on behalf of Galley, such as astonished me more than if the honest fellow had played booty, and turned king's evidence: his defence was, that he was a *young woman.* And as one of the gentler sex, supposed to be incapable of piratical conduct—and also being very good-looking—the judges acquitted her on that plea. And now you will easily understand, my friend, how the fact of Mr Kavanagh's turning out to be Mr Denton does not appear to me so very extraordinary. You may think that one of us, at all events, was cognizant of Galley's sex, for whose sake, perhaps, he might even have assumed the masculine garb; but this was certainly not so; and, indeed, the sixth article of our regulations (which were common, I believe, to all the fraternity) ran as follows: *If any man is found carrying a woman to sea disguised, or even conniving at such an act, he shall suffer death.*'

'You had laws, then, it seems, like honest people?' observed Robert.

'Most certainly. We had Articles of War, some of which, at least, were as strictly observed as on board of a king's ship, and to which every man had to subscribe; and I did so myself (though of course under compulsion). There were ten (if I remember right) in all. Number one established universal suffrage: *Every man had an equal vote in affairs of moment; an equal share of the fresh provisions and strong liquors, at any time seized, and might use them at pleasure,* [illegible]

scarcity (no uncommon thing with us) *made it necessary to vote a retrenchment.* Number two referred to public property, *in which, if any man defrauded his companions, if it was but the worth of a dollar, he was marooned* (that is, set on the first desolate island we might come to, with a gun and a few charges of powder and shot, and a bottle of water, to perish of starvation). *If the robbery was only between one another, the offender had his ears and nose split, but was not marooned.* The third article was directed against gambling, and was by no means scrupulously observed. The fourth commanded *lights and candles to be extinguished at eight o'clock; and if any of the crew after that hour were still inclined for drinking, they were to drink on the open deck.* The fifth related to keeping the cutlasses and pistols clean and fit for service, and was the most popular of all. The men were extravagantly nice in the beauty and richness of their weapons, and would give sometimes at an auction (at the mast) as much as forty pounds a pair for pistols, which they wore in time of service slung over their shoulders, and adorned with ribbons. The sixth article I have already quoted. The seventh decreed *death to any man who should desert the ship or his quarters in battle.* The eighth was to arrange quarrels. *There was to be no striking on board, but* (as I have said) *at the nearest convenient spot, the disputants were landed and placed back to back at twenty paces. At the word of command, they turned and fired immediately, or else the piece was knocked out of their hands. Then, if both missed, they came to their cutlasses, and who drew first blood was held the victor.* The ninth enacted that *no man should talk of breaking up their way of living until each had [illegible] a thousand pounds. But if any man should lose*

a limb or become a cripple in the public service, he was to have eight hundred dollars out of the common stock, and for lesser hurts proportionally. The tenth and last article provided *the captain and quartermaster should receive two shares of a prize; the master, boatswain, and gunner, one share and a half; and other officers, one and a quarter.*'

'Then there were persons in authority, as well as laws among you?' remarked Robert, not forgetful of Mr Maguire's anarchical opinions of the previous night.

'Yes, there were; nor do I deny that such institutions are necessary. Nevertheless, so far as government was concerned, the *Mother Carey* was, I contend, a model vessel; nay, there is no doubt, looking at the matter as a commercial speculation, that, with ordinary prudence, any man on board might have made his thousand pounds twice over! The law against drunkenness, however, and gambling was almost a dead letter; and the captain, as you may judge from my own case, was unnecessarily brutal.'

'Was he cruel to others as well as yourself, then?' inquired Robert.

'Yes, indeed. I have known him make a poor skipper, in whose cargo he was disappointed, eat his own ears with pepper and salt! He had not the head-piece for a captain; and that is what I complain of in other societies, that men who are altogether unfit for it are trusted with authority.'

Robert was too horrified with the incident of the skipper's ears, to pay much attention to this philosophical observation; but it did not escape him that Mr *Maguire was* very charitable in his views with r[illegible] *to piracy, and* seemed inexplicably desirous

listener a convert to them. At that time, however, he did not think very seriously of the matter. Mr Maguire still appeared to him in the light of a *lusus naturæ*—a being to excite wonder rather than apprehension. He did not reflect that representations of exciting adventure, and wealth easily come by, although they had no influence upon himself, might have their weight with more ignorant and impulsive hearers; that the spark which falls innocuous on the hearth-rug, will set a heap of shavings in a blaze.

'You think, then, that if you had had a wise man instead of a brute for captain, you would have made an excellent speculation of the *Mother Carey*,' observed Robert drily; 'and that each of the crew might have retired from business upon a handsome fortune?'

'Yes, I do,' said Maguire boldly. 'If I had not been an ass at that time, I might now myself be a rich man, for that matter.'

'They gave you a share of their gains, then, though you were but an amateur?'

'Of course they did; why the deuce should they not?' answered the other, so naïvely, and even indignantly, that Robert refrained from putting the inquiry that had suggested itself, as to how Mr Maguire had reconciled it to his conscience to partake of such ill-got spoil. 'Yes, I could have made my fortune,' continued he, 'had I had the head on my shoulders which I carry now; while Captain Grim, drunkard and gambler as he was, used to boast of his twenty thousand pounds laid up in some place, which he was wont to say "only himself and the devil knew of; and the longest liver should take all." His weakness was [illegible] Mr [illegible] expressing tone

'under the influence of which he became just what all men in authority become who have no right to their high places—tyrannical. I shall never forget his firing a brace of pistols right and left under the dinner-table one night among us all, "in order," as he explained, "that we should not forget who he was." We fined him eight hundred dollars, however, for breaking the mate's leg with one of the bullets, so that it was an expensive shot.'

'Then it must have been rather dangerous work to be even purser on board the *Mother Carey?*' remarked Robert.

'Oh, that was nothing,' answered Maguire coolly. 'I've—that is, I have known a man on board that ship to stand in the powder-magazine during an action in which we were likely to get the worst of it, torch in hand, with orders from the captain to send all to blazes, in case things went the wrong way.—But here's one of your sheep from the steerage in search of his shepherd.' And leaving Robert with one of his many charges, who happened to come up at that moment to make some complaint respecting rations—he had forgotten for the tenth time to bring his pannikin and other utensils on deck to receive them, and the steward had poured rice, oatmeal, and flour, peas, sugar, and tea, into one paper-bag, in a rage—Mr Maguire sauntered away. It struck Robert that he was glad to do so; that he had spoken rather more freely than he had intended to do respecting his own share in the proceedings of the crew of the *Mother Carey*, and this idea was strengthened by the fact, that he made no further allusion to that vessel of his own accord, and was chary of doing so even when *interrogated* concerning her.

The Star of Erin pursued her voyage [redacted]

whole most favourably; there were storms and calms, of course, but for the most part she had fine weather, and there was little to complain of save the tediousness inseparable from life on shipboard. Notwithstanding what has been sung of it, this is a very prosaic state of existence; on sea, one day is more like another than it can possibly be on shore, even in the most unvarying of households. The smallest details assume a gigantic importance. The sight of a shoal of porpoises, the catching of a shark, the speaking with another ship, are events to be remembered, because they are the only ones. The sunsets of the tropics are gorgeous, but there are times when the sun is not setting, and, to say the truth, 'the boys' did not, as a general rule, appreciate it even when it did. Some of the women made themselves useful in cooking, and mending, and washing clothes; but the men did nothing; when they were not listening to Mr Maguire's yarns, of which they were very greedy, they lay on deck and slept all day, then went below, and slept again—a mode of existence which suited them very well. Robert had his duties, such as they were, to occupy him; he borrowed a few books from the captain, of whom he was a great favourite, and devoured them word by word; and had always by him a letter for Lizzie, ready for any homeward-bound vessel that might volunteer to be their ocean-postman. But the time hung heavily on his hands. How differently would it have passed (thought he) if he could have had Lizzie for a fellow-passenger! how differently it *would* pass when she had once joined him in the Underworld! His letters were full of that bright prospect, we may be sure.

When they had [illegible] months at sea, an

incident happened to vary the monotony of their existence. Mr Kavanagh emerged from his cabin in his own proper character. The enthusiasm among the tenants of the steerage was immense, yet not so great as it would have been, had his presence on board been unsuspected: one by one, 'the boys'—that is, his own Tipperary boys—had been of late admitted into the secret, and these had told the rest. But even as it was, the turmoil and excitement were something startling. There was not only joy that the young master was among them; there was also triumph because a victory had been obtained over the law. The crew, indeed, were comparatively indifferent about the matter, but they formed but a small portion of the population of the *Star of Erin*. The captain, as Robert could not but remark, not only did not share in these manifestations of delight, but showed some signs of displeasure. This might be accounted for by the fact, that he had been imposed upon—used as a cat's-paw by Kavanagh—for it seemed he had himself been ignorant hitherto of the identity of that gentleman with Denton; but, at all events, so it was. The steerage passengers were exceedingly uproarious that night, having had liquor supplied them by Murphy; and Robert remained on deck until a late hour, in case his services might be required amongst them. While thus keeping voluntary watch, the captain came up and spoke with him on the matter, and his manner seemed uneasy; they both agreed that to give liquor in such abundance to so excitable a throng was most injudicious: it might have been fancy, but, in the moonlight, Robert caught sight of something gleaming in the captain's breast-pocket which looked very like the butt of a revolver.

CHAPTER XI.

PROMOTION.

Towards morning, and when the sounds of disorder from beneath had at last ceased, Robert was about to retire to his berth, when suddenly he heard a cry of 'Help, help!' from the direction of the captain's cabin. Apprehensive, he scarcely knew of what, he rushed towards it, when on his way he was arrested by a repetition of the cry, not from where he had expected, but from the cabin occupied by his patron. It was uttered in muffled, half-suffocated tones; and finding the door locked, Robert flung himself without a moment's hesitation against it, and forced it open. Mr Kavanagh was alone, sitting up in his berth, with the skull-cap on that he now wore night and day, and pointing with shaking finger to some object—an imaginary one, as it turned out—in the centre of the cabin. The moonlight which streamed in on him at the little window showed his staring eyes, his trembling lips, his features palsied as if with excess of terror. 'Help, help!' he continued to cry in a hoarse whisper. 'Keep him off! keep him off! I say. He struck me first; I swear it.'

'Who struck you, Mr Kavanagh? There is no one here,' said Robert soothingly.

'Is, there is—there—with his strangled

face!' and the bare stretched-out arm pointed quiveringly where nothing was to be seen. 'Help, Murphy, help!'

'I am here, master,' answered Murphy from without. Then pushing hurriedly in, and seeing Robert, he whispered huskily: 'Be off, lad; you are not wanted here.'

Robert heard him, but took no notice: he had, he deemed, as much right to be where he was as Murphy had; nay, more, for it was clear enough that the latter was much intoxicated, and therefore unfit to be of service to his master; and, moreover, the insolence of the man's tone was such as might well excite antagonism.

'Do you hear, you fool?' continued Murphy savagely. 'You are not wanted here.'

'Yes, yes; take him away,' muttered Kavanagh, huddling himself in the bed-clothes. 'His mouth is bleeding. There, there!'

It was clear to any person who had the use of his senses that these words could have reference to no visible being; but no sooner were they uttered, than, as if taking them as a positive command, Murphy threw himself on Robert with the fury of a wild beast, and dragged him to the door. The suddenness of the attack for the moment overcame the lad; but he soon recovered himself, and grappled with his assailant, not without effect. Had they both been on equal terms, indeed, the conflict would not long have been doubtful, but Murphy, being far gone in liquor, lost his footing, and fell on the cabin floor, with Robert above him. There they writhed and struggled, till presently Maguire appeared, half-dressed, and far from sober-looking, at the open door.

'What is it, Dick?' inquired he. 'Is it money you're wrastling for?'

'Put him out!' roared Murphy—'put him out!'

'Nay, it's an eviction, is it? Then you may just put him out yourself, for it's contrary to my principles to lend a hand to it.'

'The master don't want him here,' gasped Murphy, for Robert's hand had fastened on his neckerchief to some purpose. 'He's got the fit on him.'

'Oh, that's another thing,' replied Maguire gravely. —'I am the last man to interfere with an honest rough-and-tumble, Master Chesney, but this exhibition must positively close.' He stooped down over the combatants, and seizing Robert, who was still uppermost, by the neck, compelled him, on pain of suffocation, to let go his hold; then swung him outside the cabin-door, as easily as though he had been a cat, and closed it. Like a cat, Robert alighted on his feet, and sprang at the door, though a moment's reflection must have convinced him that it would be madness to attempt to push his way against two such antagonists: he had forced the lock in the first instance, but the opposition he now encountered was far stronger than that of bolt or bar.

A chuckling sound from within proclaimed the sense of superiority enjoyed by at least one of the besieged, and convinced him of the uselessness of his efforts. Furious and baffled, he retired to his own cabin, not to sleep, but to reflect on the humiliation he had so unjustly suffered. He was no tale-bearer, but he was thoroughly resolved to lay the whole matter before Mr Kavanagh, and if not righted by him, to withdraw from [redacted] service degraded by [redacted] companionship as Murphy's.

In the New World, a man might make his own way without a patron. Still he could not forget that he was under great obligations to Kavanagh, nor forbear to pity his present condition. A London lad, in the same position in life, would probably have been at no loss for the right name for the attack to which he had been so lately a witness, but to Robert it seemed some uncommon disorder—perhaps an epileptic fit.

Days went by, and on the morning of each, Robert presented himself at Kavanagh's cabin, only to be refused admittance in Murphy's dogged tones; but this, and a certain offensive grin with which Maguire now greeted him, only made him more intent upon his purpose. On the sixth morning, he was admitted. He found Mr Kavanagh looking very ill and pale, which touched him; and when he held out his wasted hand for him to take, and welcomed him even more kindly than usual, his wrongs somehow lost their proportions, and became at most a grievance.

'So I hear you have been to ask after me every morning, Robert?'

'Yes, indeed, sir; but Murphy denied me admittance. He said I was not wanted.'

'Well, well, he is gone now, and you are here,' urged Kavanagh, smiling. 'He's a rough fellow, and, I know, resents another's showing me any regard, which is very unreasonable.'

'Nay, sir, I find no fault with him on that account; but when you were taken ill the other night and cried "Help, help!"'——A sudden spasm shot across the sick man's face.—'Something ails you, sir,' said Robert hastily. 'It was very selfish of me to be making complaints at such a time: forgive me.'

'No, no; I am better now,' gasped Kavanagh. 'I would rather hear all about it. I cried "Help, help!" you say?'

'Yes, sir; and then I ran in, and found you sitting up in bed, and pointing to I know not what.'

'Well, well, and what did I say more?' inquired the sick man nervously.

'Nothing more, sir, that was any sense. But while you wandered on, in Murphy came, and bade me leave the cabin, since you did not want me. It might have been so, but it seemed to me you did want "help" of some sort; and since he was drunk, and I was sober, that I was the better fitted to give it. Then he threw himself upon me, and strove to turn me out by force. I left my mark upon his throat, I reckon.' Here Robert paused, stopped this time by an ejaculation from the other of pain and horror.

'What wickedness!' he murmured; 'you might have strangled him!'

'Indeed, sir, he might have strangled *me*,' answered Robert, indignant at what seemed to him an expression of gross favouritism. 'If the big drunken brute had kept his feet, he *would* have done it. I do not show my own regard for you, by flying like a bull-dog at the faces of your friends, but I strive to serve you, sir, as best I can'——

'You do, you *do*,' interrupted Kavanagh. 'It is an ill return to be treated thus indeed. It shall not happen again; I will speak to Murphy.'—Robert smiled incredulously.—'Ah, you think speaking of no use? Well, we shall see: tell Murphy to come hither at once.'

[redacted] sir, there is [redacted] trouble yourself

about the matter so immediately,' urged Robert; 'when you get well and strong'——

'I said *at once*,' reiterated Kavanagh; 'did you not hear me?'

Robert opened the cabin-door, and there stood Murphy in close attendance.

'Mr Kavanagh wants you.'

Without bestowing a glance at the speaker, Murphy made one stride to his master's pillow, and there stood, obedient as the dog that hears the shepherd's voice, and springing to his side awaits his signal.

'I wish to speak to you, Dick, about our good friend, Robert, here. We are not in England now, begirt by spies, and hunted by the bloodhounds of the law; and when we were, remember, though you doubted him, this lad proved true as steel. There is no danger in his being one of us, in short, and if there were, I still would wish it. Don't speak'—his voice became imperative, and even harsh—'my mind is fixed upon it, and immovable. What you and I lack we have found in this good lad. He can use his wits and fingers too, and in the days to come will be more useful to us even than he has been. At present, he has no authority, and you (he tells me) take advantage of it to treat him as you dare not treat one of those whom I have placed under his charge. This must not be. In future, look on him as my lieutenant, my second in command, whom, in my absence, you will obey as though he were myself. And if I die'——

'The saints forbid!' ejaculated Murphy piously.

'Still, it may happen, Dick,' continued Kav[illegible] *kindly*, 'and then what would become of a[ll] *fellows, without* a head? I say, if I [illegible]

man, so far as I can make him so—and with *you* at least I *can*—is my successor. Do you hear?'

The expression of Mr Richard Murphy's countenance was curious to witness. Rage, dislike, humiliation, were struggling within him against a habit of obedience to his master's wishes that was second nature; he looked from Chesney to Kavanagh, from Kavanagh to Chesney, in such pitiable perplexity, that the latter, who had a generous spirit, was moved by it.

'Indeed, Mr Kavanagh,' said he, 'I have no wish to exercise authority over Murphy, but merely to be made secure from any such outrage as he put upon me the other night.'

'That I feel sure of, Robert, or I should not intrust you with it. I know too well, from my own case, how ill it is to possess a power that one is not fit to wield.' Here he stopped and sighed.

'Arrah, be aisy, Mr Frank; sure, yourself is the king of men,' whispered Murphy reassuringly; but the other took no notice.

'Yes, that is the only way,' continued he thoughtfully. 'I tried to make you a friend of this good lad, Dick, but that, through your own fault, has failed. I now make him your superior. You could not give your good-will, it seems; but there will be no excuse for refusing your obedience.'

'And is the likes of him to come between me and you, Masther Frank?' asked Murphy pitifully.

'No, Dick; no man can do that, I think, nor woman either,' answered Kavanagh tenderly. 'Don't fret, man. The lad has had honour done him, but not [illegible] Give me your hands, both of you.'

[illegible] once

before on the night of their first meeting. Robert grasped Murphy's fingers heartily enough, and Murphy returned the pressure, keeping his eyes, however, intently fixed upon Kavanagh's face.

'You see what I am doing, master, for your sake,' they seemed to say.

'That's well, Dick; now leave us for the present, for I have some private talk to finish with Mr Chesney.'

'Very good, Masther Frank.—Perhaps, sir'—and here he turned to Robert with an air of hesitating respect—'you will kindly let me know when you have done, and I may come back again.' As he said these words, he ran out of the cabin as though he could bear the scene no longer; to address Robert as his superior thus voluntarily, had probably been the hardest task which he had ever set himself to do.

'Poor Dick!' ejaculated Kavanagh remorsefully.

'I think that ought to content you, lad.'

'Indeed, sir, it was more than I asked, or even desired,' answered Robert.

'Perhaps,' replied the other; 'but it was necessary. I remember when I was at the military college—years ago in France—the only way by which a certain worthy cadet could be saved from a most unmerited persecution was by creating him a sub-lieutenant; and a first-rate officer he made.'

'You were in the army, then, sir?' asked Robert simply.

'Yes and no: that is, I had a military training, which might have been useful had circumstances turned out as they were expected to do.'

'*In Ireland*, I suppose?'

'*Yes; there* is no need to make a secret of [redacted]

ter now, even if you have not guessed it. I nourished a vain dream, which was only real inasmuch as it was dangerous. On board ship, I was obliged to be Denton; in Herne Street, I was Wilson. You see, I keep nothing from you, lieutenant.'

'Yes, sir,' replied Robert naïvely. 'I should like, however, if you would not take it ill, to ask you one more question.'

'What is that?' Kavanagh's tone became suddenly impatient, and even suspicious, and under pretence of settling his skull-cap on his head, he covered his eyes with his hand. 'I never promised to tell you all my private affairs, however.'

'Indeed, sir, I should not be so impertinent as to inquire into them. But might I ask what sort of man is he whom they call "Misther Maguire?"'

Kavanagh removed his hand from his face, and revealed an expression of great relief.

'Oh, Maguire!' answered he gaily. 'Yes, he is a strange fellow, and I do not wonder that he has excited your curiosity. Moreover, it is only right it should be satisfied, since it is likely he will be more or less mixed up with our own fortunes. Well, he was the son of a gentleman on a neighbouring estate to that of my father, and who, like the bad boys of the story-books, ran away at an early age to sea. He led a very queer life, I fancy—what is called "a checkered career," which is mostly black, you know; though I don't believe there was ever much real harm in him. When he returned home after a quarter of a century, he found matters worse than he had left them. His [redacted] by the mortgagees [redacted] what had [redacted] property, and [redacted] tries,

such as only occur in Ireland. Then he got mixed up in "the troubles," and had to flee the country and save his skin, poor fellow—like myself.'

'Nay, sir, not so; for it seems to me that he had nothing to lose, and all to gain, whereas you had an estate at stake.'

'I had at one time—yes,' returned Kavanagh thoughtfully. 'There is something in what you say, perhaps, though we have no right to impute selfish motives. You do not like Mr Maguire, it seems.'

'I don't dislike him, sir, personally, but I confess that—of late—he has seemed to me to be a dangerous man.'

'Dangerous! why dangerous?' inquired Kavanagh quickly.

'Well, sir, I can't exactly say; but this man has great influence among our people, and if he choose to use it ill, there might be great danger. I am certain, at all events, that that is the captain's opinion. You have been ill and confined to your cabin, so that you may not have observed it; but I notice that both he and the other officers of the ship go about armed.'

'Armed! How long has that been the case?' inquired Kavanagh with excitement, a deep flush suffusing his pale face.

'Since the day you came on deck in your real character.'

'That is strange,' muttered Kavanagh; 'very strange. Is this a matter of general remark; do the boys know it?'

'I think not, sir; they do not take much notice of anything; but there is one man that knows it h[illegible]

myself, unless I am much mistaken; and that is Maguire himself.'

'Ah; then he should have told me. I mean,' added Kavanagh hastily, 'he should have confessed that he had been guilty of a foolish indiscretion. There is no harm in him, nor in my people; but there should be no ground for supposing harm. Keep your eyes open, Robert, for the future, and, above all things, your mouth shut. To talk of danger before some people is like putting a match to a fire-grate that is already laid. And now tell poor Dick that I am ready to see him. To-morrow, or the next day, at furthest, I shall be well and about again. Good-day, lad, good-day.'

CHAPTER XII.

THE VOLCANIC ISLAND.

THE interview was over, and clearly, as it seemed to Robert, hurried to a close by the tidings which he had just communicated. It was evident that Mr Kavanagh had been unaware of the effect produced by his own appearance among his people, and yet, when informed of it, he had not expressed that disapprobation which might have been expected of him. He must surely have known more of Maguire also than he had chosen to reveal, and in that respect, as perhaps in [redacted] was still, [redacted] only

half trusted. On the other hand, his appointment, if it could be called such, of second in command to his patron was at least a proof of extreme favour, while to the fact that it was genuine, Murphy's own behaviour abundantly testified.

Neither on the next day nor for many days afterwards did Robert again see Mr Kavanagh. That gentleman was once more reported ill, and remained in his berth visited only by Murphy and Maguire. It would have doubtless been within the scope of Chesney's newly-conferred authority to insist on being admitted to the sick man's cabin; but he took no advantage of this. The same wild cries for 'Help!' the same half-suffocated sounds were repeated as he had heard on the previous occasion, and something hinted to him that whatever might be the nature of his patron's seizures, the presence of an unaccustomed witness like himself would not be welcome to him. The ship's surgeon had attended the patient in the first instance, but of late he had not done so, since, as he explained to Robert, the two men in question thoroughly understood the case, and were competent to deal with it. The ship was by this time advanced far across the Indian Ocean, and was within a few hundred miles of the western coast of Australia, and the emigrants, no longer influenced by Maguire (whom Kavanagh's illness seemed to have greatly sobered, and who was much engaged about the sick man's person), and excited by the prospect of a termination to their tedious voyage, passed much of their time on deck, looking out for the first glimpse of land. Thus Robert made a more intimate acquaintance than he had hitherto done, not only with those under his own charge, but with the

his fellow-passengers, and was much struck with the difference between them. The Tipperary boys, with their wives and families, gave but little thought to their future, appearing to leave that, with great contentedness, in the hands of their patron; while the others were never tired of speculating like children upon the new world they were so rapidly approaching, where potatoes grew without planting, and all were masters, and none servants. But just when they seemed to be on the point of realizing these brilliant visions, Fortune, which had hitherto so favoured the voyage of the *Star of Erin*, turned dead against her; a furious gale sprang up from the north-west, and drove the ship under bare poles hundreds of miles out of her course, at a pace she had never achieved when in full sail. The hatches had to be battened down, and the unhappy tenants of the steerage were reduced to a condition even worse than that in which they had been plunged at first: to the horrors of sea-sickness, were now added unspeakable terrors. In their dark and confined quarters, amid the howling of the tempest, and the straining of the ship's timbers, they looked for nothing less than death, from dawn to night, from night to dawn. This continued for many days, and when the wind slackened and the ship became once more under control, she was pronounced by the captain to be a greater distance from the desired haven than she had been at the beginning of the gale. The sun, indeed, had once more reappeared; the sea, like some passionate domestic despot, who, having committed endless ravage in his wrath, is astonished, now that it is over, that any one should remember it, wore a thou-

[redacted] *miles; but the* [redacted] huddled together

on deck, and heart-sick with hope deferred, refused to be comforted, and believed themselves doomed to wander over the watery waste for ever. Curiously enough, the condition of Kavanagh had improved during the late commotion, and his first act, when circumstances permitted of an interchange of talk—which had been absolutely impossible during the gale—was to send for Robert, who, to his great surprise, found his patron up and dressed.

'Better, lad; yes, I am better,' said he, in answer to his congratulations; 'but this bout has given me a lesson. If I had died, it would have been heavy on my conscience—which, alas! has its weight to bear already—that I should have left my sheep with a shepherd indeed, but without the means of pasturing them. Murphy, it is true, is as honest as this blessed sunlight that at last is shining on us again; but with all the good-will in the world to serve me, he has no head for management of any kind. Here are three thousand pounds in English notes, of which you will take charge, taking care at the same time that nobody suspects you of being my banker except for current expenses. When occasion arises, you will make disbursements on our common account and on that of my poor people, which I will audit from time to time. Then, if anything should happen to me—I don't say I apprehend it, but I think it right to take precautions—I leave you my trustee and guardian in their interests: when you shall once have given them a fair start, the balance may be retained by yourself, or, what is better, given to your sweetheart, from one who never knew her, but *who wishes* her well, as her marriage portion.—It is *my own property*, man,' cried Kavanagh with

vehemence, and observing Robert to hesitate. 'Do you suppose that I would give away what is *not* my own?'

'Indeed, sir, I was not thinking that at all,' answered Chesney earnestly, 'but only of your great kindness and generosity: most sincerely do I trust that you may long live to expend this money to greater advantage, doubtless, than I should use; but it is a very large sum; and though such confidence cannot but be gratifying to me, the responsibility is great.'

'Nay, nay, lad,' said Kavanagh reassuringly; 'one can only do one's best, which I have no fear but that you will do. While as to the mere safety of the money, it will be more secure with you, since you will never be suspected of the possession of it, than with myself. I have had warnings that my life is at best a precarious one; and though I flatter myself, could I once escape from this cursed imprisonment, and set a free foot on land——What's that?'

A sudden turmoil had broken out on the deck above them; clappings of hands and shouts of joy were heard; and while they listened, the cabin-door was flung open by Murphy, who rushed in, in a wild state of excitement, crying, 'Land, Land! Begorra, Mr Frank, we're there.'

'It is impossible,' answered Kavanagh incredulously, rising from his seat, nevertheless, with an eager light in his eyes. 'The captain told me only an hour ago that it would take us a week to make the coast.'

'Sure the coast is ready-made then, for there it is, not half-a-dozen miles away. I've been up the mast-head to look, and there it lies all green and glorious like Ould Ireland, [illegible] with just a bit of hill like the [illegible] of Howth [illegible] the middle of it.'

'The man is drunk,' said Kavanagh contemptuously. 'Give me *your* arm, Robert, and help me on deck, that I may see with my own eyes.'

The joy and excitement in Murphy's face faded as suddenly out as when the slide is withdrawn from a magic-lantern, and leaves the blank white sheet. '"Drunk," am I?' muttered he, as he watched them go slowly out; 'and "give me *your* arm, Robert!" is it? Well, I obey you, Mr Frank, and therefore obey *him;* but, Holy Moses! how I hate him.' On deck, both passengers and crew had all assembled, and it was with some difficulty that Robert could make way for his companion through the crowd, to where the captain stood talking to one of the officers of the ship.

'What is it?' asked Kavanagh eagerly: 'what is this nonsense about land?'

'I know no more than yourself,' answered the captain coldly and ungraciously, as Robert thought, considering that he was addressing the most influential passenger on board his ship, and moreover a sick man. 'That land it is, there is no doubt, as any glass will show you, but how it comes there, is more than I can tell. It is not in the chart, that's certain. Nor can it be the mainland, which lies more than five hundred miles to eastward.'

Here a telescope was offered by some bystander, and Kavanagh endeavoured to adjust it, but whether from excitement, or the weakness arising from his late illness, his hand was so unsteady that he could make no use of it. 'There; do you take it, Robert,' said he pettishly, 'for I am too weak to hold it. Tell me what *you see.*'

'*It is* land without doubt,' answered Robert, and

indeed, to the naked eye, what had seemed a dark cloud resting on the eastward horizon, was already assuming colour and consistency; 'and if an island, it is a large one—large but low, except for one green hill in the centre; but I see no trace of trees.'

'If this was in the Chinese waters,' observed the firm but quiet voice of Maguire, 'I should be at no loss to tell you what it was.'

'Neither should I, if I were nearing the Needles,' answered the captain contemptuously, 'for then I should say it was the Isle of Wight.'

'And that would be a very good guess for a home-voyager,' answered Maguire coolly. 'A man need only have been as far as Palermo, however, to see an island that has come up out of the sea, and here, if I am not much mistaken, is one of the same kidney. Off the Philippines I have seen half-a-dozen of them.'

'You know a deal more about seafaring, Mr Maguire, it seems to me, than when you first came on board,' remarked the captain significantly, and regarding the object of debate attentively through his glass; 'and I don't mean to say that you mayn't be right as to this island. I have seen Nerita myself in the Mediterranean which sprang up, as you say, in a single night; but this has grass upon it, and looks a well-established concern enough. I only hope it has got fresh water, for we shall want it before many days are out.'

'There is something shining like a silver thread,' observed Robert, 'and running down from the hill-side towards the sea: that must surely be a river.'

Half-an-hour more resolved all doubts. The island *in question, which* had very deep water all about it (a

circumstance that corroborated the idea that it was of volcanic origin), so that the ship could coast quite close to it, was of considerable dimensions. It was covered with such beautiful verdure as delighted and refreshed the sea-wearied eyes of all, and had at least two considerable streams of fresh water, still more welcome to the captain's view. A little bay on its more remote shore—the eastern one—formed a natural harbour, and into this the ship was steered and anchored. To see the enfranchised emigrants rush on shore, some rolling like dogs or horses for very joy upon the shining sward, some running along the shore as though to convince themselves that they had at last the use of their legs, and all shouting with mirth, was like beholding a school on 'breaking-up day.' Kavanagh himself looked bright and hopeful as Robert had never seen him since they had set sail. 'Murphy,' said he, 'I spoke to you harshly and unjustly a while ago. Put that down to my ill health, not to ill will. Come, let us take our first walk upon dry land together. Do you think that you and Robert, between you, could pull me up yonder hill?'

'One's plenty, Mr Frank, for a job like that,' answered Murphy eagerly: 'just get astride upon my neck —so—that's well. There is not a mother yonder with a child in her arms that feels the burden as light as I do now.' And before Robert could offer his assistance —which indeed he would have been loath to do, for Murphy's sake, who would certainly have deeply resented it—the faithful fellow had started for the hill with his master on his shoulders. Robert walked *rapidly by* their side, for no slow pace would have kept *up with Murphy's* giant strides, in readiness to give his

aid should it be required; and in that order the three left the crowd and climbed the hill. Arrived at the top, Kavanagh descended from his human steed, who had showed no signs of weariness, and proceeded to survey this singular territory; his reconnaissance being supplemented by Robert's eyes, who used the glass. To the latter, accustomed to the thick foliage of the forest, the island looked bare and bald enough; but whatever its foundations might be composed of, the upper soil was evidently rich, and even at the elevation at which they stood far from rocky or barren. Its whole extent could not be less than ten miles long by eleven broad.

'It is quite a little kingdom in itself,' murmured Kavanagh delightedly.

'*Then why should you not reign over it, Masther Frank?*' This rejoinder came from Murphy, and was a much more apt one than might have been expected from his lips; but it was characteristic of the man and of his relations with Kavanagh, that, whereas except for some gleams of humour which seemed themselves to be unconsciously uttered, he was for the most part dull and unready, it was often otherwise when speaking with reference to his patron's interests; his wits seemed sharpened by the anxiety he felt to further them; and though judgment was often wanting even then, readiness never failed him. The suggestion he now made, doubtless out of the abundance of his personal loyalty, rather than with any serious idea of its being realized, seemed to strike Kavanagh amazingly.

'Reign over it!' exclaimed he, striking his palms together. 'Why not? By Heaven! Dick, you have more wit than ten Maguires. Here is good soil, fresh water, and room to increase and multiply. Why not

establish our own colony *here*, where no flag flouts the breeze, to remind us that we are still slaves as well as exiles?—Your judgment, Robert, is of the sober sort; what think you of the plan?'

'Well, sir, we can't eat grass, nor can the women and children lie on the bare earth'——

'There is no need for either,' interposed Kavanagh enthusiastically. 'We have provisions enough and to spare for months, as the captain told me. We have tents, too, and even houses that can be set up in a few hours. We have seeds in plenty, and agricultural implements of all sorts. I have money, too, far beyond what you imagine—for there was no need to tempt you with the knowledge of it, good lad, to follow my fortunes. Well, why should I not employ it to get all we need from the main-land—clothes, timber, cattle'——

'The whiskey is getting low,' suggested Murphy delicately.

'Be serious, you omadhawn.—Why not, Robert, I say, use Melbourne as our storehouse, but in other respects be independent of the world? The prospect seems a dream—a golden dream; but why should it not be realized? Why *should* I not be king, as Murphy puts it, and you prime-minister? Why shouldn't your Lizzy,' he added in Robert's ear, 'come out and marry you? A parson shall be imported for the very purpose, look you; there's my hand on it—and after my death you shall be king yourself, and all your progeny princes and princesses. Think of it, man—think of it!'

The air and tone of the speaker were wild and excited, beyond anything that Robert had yet seen in *him; but* the theme itself seemed to excuse it. Strange *and fanciful,* indeed, it was, but by no means ill-

to win the ear of youth; and, moreover, there was no doubt, whatever might be the final success of the scheme, that it could be at least inaugurated. To Robert, it is true, it lacked the attraction which it possessed for his patron, in its restriction to his own people and dependants; but, on the other hand, here was a home assured for Lizzy and her kindred at the outset; while the idea of his wielding so large a personal influence in the new colony, both at present and in the future, was also, doubtless, not without its influence.

'Do you think your people would themselves be in favour of such a plan?' inquired Robert doubtfully.

'Do I *think!* no; I am certain.' And Murphy laughed a laugh that carried more conviction with it than even his master's words.

Robert himself, indeed, had little doubt that most, if not all, of Kavanagh's immediate followers would hail the plan with delight, and not at all the less so because of its romantic wildness; but still the natural prudence of his character, and his very knowledge that the temptation of Lizzy's immediate coming was having a greater weight with him than *all* other considerations, bade him pause.

'It matters not whether we prosper here or not,' continued Kavanagh persuasively. 'I shall get the captain to sell me a boat or two—one, at least, large enough to accomplish the voyage to Melbourne, from which place we could send over for the rest. Then all could start afresh, as we had originally intended to do. But I feel certain we shall prosper here. The captain has already taken the bearings of the island, [redacted] favourably: if we [redacted] that others

would. You were saying but a while ago how gladly you would welcome your friends the Alstons in the New World; with how much greater pride can you now invite them to our own private territory! No money shall be spared by me to further your wishes as to their coming; and if the ship that brings them from England cannot be induced to steer a few days out of her course, a vessel shall be hired to bring them out from Melbourne immediately upon their arrival. It is a romance, my lad, I grant, from first to last; but there is no reason why it should not be a Romance of Reality.'

The enthusiasm of the speaker's tone, the brilliancy of the future he depicted, the brightness and gaiety of the scene that lay stretched before them, combined together to sweep away Robert's last lingering doubts.

'So far as I can help you, Mr Kavanagh,' said he impulsively, 'my services are altogether at your disposal, whether here or elsewhere.'

'That's well, and spoken like yourself,' cried the other. 'For the present, then, they will be elsewhere. You must go on in the *Star* to Melbourne, and purchase all things that we may require; then return to us as soon as may be.'

'I will do my best, sir,' replied Robert hesitatingly; 'but you speak as though the affair was settled. There are your people to be spoken to, and the captain'——

'Leave the people to me,' answered Kavanagh smiling; 'and as for the captain, you may take my word for it he will be glad enough to get rid of us —. *And now, Murphy*, there is one thing more [redacted] *done. Two hours* ago, I doubted your [redacted]

you spoke of land in sight—I am now about to make you compensation——Do you happen to have a drop of whiskey in your pocket?'

'Have I a drop of blood in my body, do you mean, Masther Frank!' replied Murphy reproachfully, and producing from his coat a flask of the vintage of his native land.

Kavanagh placed it to his lips, and said, 'I name this island *Murphy's Island;*' then took a deep draught.

'The honour is too much for the likes of me, Masther Frank,' returned Dick; 'I feel quite overcome by it, and must just take a sup myself.—Mr Chesney, I drink your very good health, and a fair voyage to Melbourne.' There was something cynical in Murphy's tone, which perhaps at any other time would have excited Robert's notice; but his mind was too full of the scheme he had just heard propounded, and the hopes or dreams which it had evoked, to pay any attention to so trifling a circumstance.

'Come, let us go down and clench this matter,' cried Kavanagh impatiently; 'for there is not an hour to lose.' And they descended to the shore accordingly.

CHAPTER XIII.

SUSPICIONS.

THE emigrants were harangued by the 'young master' with all the effect that he had anticipated: [illegible] with their long [illegible] and delighted [illegible] turf on [illegible] feet, they

were unwilling to resume their voyage even for the few days that now remained of it; not only his own people, but a considerable minority of the other passengers elected to remain where they were, under Kavanagh's authority. The captain also, as he had predicted, seemed by no means indisposed to second their wishes; and, accordingly, the seeds and implements, the tents and dwelling-houses, intended for Australia, were disembarked, along with sufficient provisions to last the islanders for two months to come, long before which Robert might be expected back with stores of all sorts. Before an hour had passed, the island with its little hill had become like an ants' nest in the spectacle it presented of activity and business; and by nightfall it wore already the appearance of an infant colony. It was clear warm weather, and most of the tenants of the steerage preferred to occupy their improvised residences on land, and even to camp out on the turf, rather than to remain in their close berths.

When all had been got out of the vessel that could well be spared, including even a couple of her boats, the pinnace and the gig (which had to be paid for very handsomely), and after four days of hard labour, wherein Robert Chesney was pronounced by the ship's carpenter to be the only man of the new colony who understood how to use his hands, the *Star* with her much diminished freight set sail for Melbourne. Robert had general instructions as to the articles he was to procure there, as well as ample funds for that purpose, but a great latitude was necessarily left to his own judgment. He had no person to whom to apply to assist *his inexperience*, except the captain, and, much to his *surprise, that* gentleman showed a strong disin[illegible]

to have anything to do with the matter. He had been very kind to Robert during the early portion of the voyage out; not only lending him books, as has been said, but taking some pains to teach him to box the compass, and even a little seamanship: but of late, his distrust and dislike of Maguire and his associates had seemed to extend in a less degree to Robert himself. Still it did seem strange that he should refuse even such scant courtesy as a little good advice. However, so it was. 'I have done Mr Kavanagh's bidding,' said he, 'in helping him and his friends out of my ship, and I did it very gladly; but they and I have shaken hands, and I shouldn't fret if we never came across one another any more. No, sir; I should be very glad to do you a personal service, but I'll neither meddle nor make with their affairs; and since you are a friend of his, and his right-hand man, you had better not inquire what has made me come to that conclusion.'

Robert was loyal to his patron, and felt the affront as though it had been put upon himself. His own explanation of the captain's ire was—first, that he had never forgiven the fugitive for having come on board the *Star* under false pretences, notwithstanding that two saloon fares had been paid for instead of one; and secondly, that Kavanagh's influence had not been exerted to the extent it might have been in quelling that disorder among his followers, which had, without doubt, at one time caused him (the captain) considerable anxiety. Robert was not inclined, however, to inquire if this was so, but kept much to the cabin, which Kavanagh had transferred to him, during the [illegible] and employed himself in composing a [illegible] say, wi[illegible]f all that

had of late so strangely happened, and painted the new prospect of their future in the brightest colours. He greatly pressed the immediate emigration of the whole family by the next steamer, and inclosed—thanks to his patron's generosity—such a sum as would easily pay their passage to *Murphy's Island* by either of the two routes suggested.

He was so fortunate as to arrive in Melbourne on the very day on which the English mail started, and his letter went off by it accordingly. To know that the missive that was to bring his Lizzy to his arms was already on its way, and that every day would speed it, was an inexpressible comfort to him, while the duties that pressed upon his attention prevented the time of sweet expectancy from lagging. Moreover, the discovery of *Murphy's Island*—it was in 40 degrees 21 minutes south latitude, 123 degrees 4 minutes east longitude—excited not a little interest, which naturally concentrated itself upon the person intrusted with the victualing of the new colony; so that curiosity and self-interest together procured him more than enough of society. Working, in short, as diligently as he could, and sparing no expense to insure expedition, it was nevertheless fully six weeks before he found himself in possession of all that he had been commissioned to procure, and got it embarked on board the sloop which he had hired for that purpose. It was a ship that had already an interest for him, for he had been informed, on application at the office of the mail-steamer, that passengers from England could not be taken to the island direct, and this very sloop would *probably bring* his Lizzy out from Melbourne, as it

was now conveying himself. Its crew consisted of some half-a-dozen men beside the skipper, and one of them, as it happened, had belonged to the *Star of Erin*, which had sailed for England while he had been delayed (or so his story ran) by illness up the country. With this man Robert was naturally more familiar than with the rest; and on the day they started for their destination, and during some conversation about the stores, the former observed, 'Well, whatever we shall find them short of when we reach the island, it won't be liquor.'

The sailor's tone was so significant, that Robert was tempted to question him; when he learned that the *Star* had been laden with an unusual quantity of spirits, and that almost all of it had been purchased by Kavanagh for the use of the colony.

'But it seems only right,' observed Chesney,' since the ship could be re-supplied at Melbourne, that as much as possible should have been left in store on the island.'

'No doubt, sir,' answered the man, grinning, 'if so be as it *has* been left in store, though, from what I have seen of our late ship-mates, they are not the ones to let good liquor spoil in the cellar.'

This reply would not have caused Robert uneasiness, but that it had seemed to him that the amount of spirits which he had been commissioned to purchase, and which he was now bringing with him, was very large; while, if it was really true that the store was already sufficient for the colonists in that respect, it would be immensely in excess of their needs.

'Well, well,' returned he, with an air of somewhat

assumed indifference, 'the cellar key will of course be taken care of, and the liquor only given out under proper restrictions.'

'By the master, sir, or the butler?' inquired the other, with a most significant action of the left eyelid.

'What the deuce do you mean, man?' asked Robert angrily.

'Well, sir, I mean no offence,' returned the other apologetically. 'Only, that's what we—I mean we of the crew—used to call Mr Kavanagh and his man: 'master and butler;' because they were such Lushingtons. I've known three bottles of whiskey go into Mr Kavanagh's cabin of a morning, and come out empty before night. I dare say Murphy helped him, and Maguire too, for that matter; but to have D. T. for the second time during one voyage, well, that's going it a leetle too fast. Of course, I thought you had known, sir, or I would not have mentioned it.'

Robert was not so simple but that he had heard of *delirium tremens*, but until that moment he had been totally unaware that he had himself been a witness to a sufferer from that complaint. This, then, was the explanation of Kavanagh's cries for 'Help!' and spectre-haunted gestures, and also of the disinclination of Murphy to admit him on such occasions to his master's cabin. A shadow seemed to fall upon his heart with the revelation; for how unstable, he reflected, must those fortunes be that, but a while ago had looked so fair, which rested on the caprice of an habitual drunkard! The vague but solemn warning of 'Miss Mary,' the foreboding farewell of Mistress Mulvaney, recurred *to him* now with novel force, and found at least their *partial interpretations*. One thing, however, was cer-

tain—he had thrown in his lot with Kavanagh; and it was far too late—and indeed for the present impossible—to dissociate their fortunes.

CHAPTER XIV.

WHAT KAVANAGH HAD DONE.

On the fifth day the sloop made the island; and its arrival was welcomed in the little harbour with evident satisfaction, yet, as it seemed to Robert, without the enthusiasm that might have been expected. There was an air of constraint about these usually frank and light-hearted people, which, under the circumstances, was quite unaccountable. Robert's first act would have been to go to Government House—as the only wooden erection of which the harbour boasted was facetiously termed, and from whose roof floated a huge green flag—to report himself to Kavanagh. 'The Governor,' however, he was informed, was not within; he had, it seemed, started with Murphy a few hours ago for another spot in his dominions upon the other side of the hill, and there was nothing for it but to proceed with the disembarkation of the stores. The live-stock, which included sheep, goats, pigs, poultry, and even a few cows, excited such admiration as no golden medallist of a metropolitan cattle-show ever extorted; for these poor folk had been living on salt junk for the last three *months*, and milk had been an unknown com-

modity even to the little children. It was no little disappointment to Robert, who was secretly conscious of having acquitted himself well as purveyor to the little commonwealth, that Mr Kavanagh was not present during these proceedings; and when they were concluded, and such things as might suffer damage from exposure placed safely under cover, he was naturally impatient to see his patron, to whom Maguire offered to conduct him. The colony had been divided, it seemed, into two parts, in consequence of a 'faction fight' that had already taken place between his 'Tipperary boys' and the other members of the community; and the latter were located on the south side of the island in a settlement of their own, to which 'the Governor' was now paying a visit, just as in disturbed districts 'a royal progress' is sometimes made for the purpose of conciliation. On the way, Robert noticed with pleasure that some attempts at cultivation had been made, and not without success, for, though the agricultural knowledge of the community was for the most part confined to planting potatoes, or the sowing of mustard and cress, the soil was so fertile that you had but to 'tickle it with a hoe and it straightway laughed in harvest.' In a few years it was plain that, with very moderate industry, *Murphy's Island* might be changed from a comparative desert to a spot not only self-supporting, but teeming with plenty. They were not long before they came in sight of New Town, as it was called, a little cluster of tents with one wooden house, from the roof of which a green flag was flying, similar to that which adorned the harbour.

'*That is* the sign of your vice-sovereignty,' observed Maguire, in answer to Robert's inquiry. 'I

ought to have told you that it has been arranged that you are to live here. The New Town folks, you see, will have no objection to *you*, since you are not connected with our Tipperary lot; while, on the other hand, it would never have done to leave them without some representative of authority.'

There was a cynicism in Maguire's tone which would not have escaped his companion, had his thoughts not been otherwise occupied; the news he had just heard was displeasing to him for a reason, which, however, he would have been ashamed to mention. He had pictured himself, as the time drew near for his Lizzy's arrival, rising every morning and sweeping the sea with his glass, to catch the first glimpse of the ship that was to bring her, and from New Town no such view could be obtained, since the hill in the centre of the island obstructed it.

'It is immaterial where I live,' observed Robert, 'and, as you say, these good folks owe me no ill-will: but I hope Mr Kavanagh has come to no harm by venturing hither; it is but an hour's walk from the harbour, and I can't understand what has detained him.'

'Oh, the Governor is safe enough,' answered Maguire carelessly; 'it is quite likely he has gone back the other way, which is a good long round.'

'Then he must be in much better health than when I left him!' exclaimed Robert.

Maguire returned no answer.

They had come in sight of a knot of men lounging and loafing in the sunshine, at the entrance of the village, looking certainly idle enough, but not so happy as idleness was wont to make them. Perhaps the

been to blame in the late disturbance, and regretted the part they had taken in it; but, at all events, Robert observed the same subdued air, though in a somewhat mitigated degree, that he had noticed in the people at the harbour. At the sight of Chesney, they rose and ran to meet him. From the southerly position of their settlement, they had been unable, as he had foreseen, to perceive the approach of the sloop, and its arrival was unknown to them.

Having answered their questions, Robert inquired, in his turn, whether 'the Governor,' as Kavanagh was gravely termed, was in the village.

'No, indeed,' said they; 'why, he has been ill for weeks.'

Robert turned to Maguire in blank astonishment.

'That's so,' said the latter coolly; 'I'll tell you all about it when we get within-doors.'

The wooden house which had been set apart for Robert's residence was the only one in New Town to which that phrase 'within-doors' could have been applied; and since such of the people as had not at once started for the harbour on the news of the sloop's arrival were now crowding about him and his companion, they hastened to take advantage of the privacy it afforded. It was but a two-roomed cabin, yet it was very neatly and even comfortably furnished in sea-fashion, thanks to Kavanagh's long purse, and the acquiescence of the captain of the *Star;* but, for the moment, Robert was far too indignant to observe this evidence of his patron's kindness, and could think only of the deception that had been practised on himself.

'*And, now* we are alone, Mr Maguire,' exclaimed he *impatiently,* 'be so good as to explain to me for

what reason I have thus been made a fool of; or is it for the mere pleasure that you may chance to take in telling a lie?'

'Sit down, my good sir,' said Maguire quietly, himself taking a chair, 'for to tell you all will be a long story. I have told you a lie, no doubt; but that is because, from the experience I have had of you, I did not think you strong enough to bear the truth. I have sounded you during our late voyage together a dozen times, and though you have doubtless done credit to your teaching (against which I have nothing to say, except that it doesn't suit my views), the result has been in every case disappointment. You have no ambition; you have no sense of independence; and you can only think in a groove. Yes, lad; you have sense and spirit, and had you shown a disposition to back me, in a matter to which there is now no need to allude, we might all, instead of ending our days on this beggarly island, have had all this side of the world to choose from, and a good ship of our own to take us whither we would.'

'You rascal, I believe you would have had us all turn pirates!' exclaimed Robert, striking the table with his hand.

'Perhaps,' answered Maguire coolly. 'But wishes unfulfilled are not crimes, I believe, at least in this life, though some good folks have affixed a penalty to them in the next. You are, I see, recalling to your mind the delicate hints that I used to drop upon this subject; my endeavours to make myself agreeable to the poor fools below-stairs; the disfavour with which the gallant captain of late regarded me; and other little *matters*. But let us not waste time either on

regrets or self-congratulations. The point is, that here we are, and we are not pirates.'

'Nay,' answered Robert firmly, 'the point is rather, that however you might have succeeded in imposing upon your own poor ignorant people, you would not have gained a man with a head on his shoulders, or a heart in his breast, to join in so mad and atrocious a scheme. Not one of them, in the first place, would have moved a finger without their master's bidding; and you will never persuade me that a gentleman like Mr Kavanagh, however imprudent and misguided, would have consented to become a thief and a murderer'——

'One moment,' interposed Maguire, laying his finger on Robert's arm: 'by a most singular and unusual accident to have occurred during a flight of virtuous eloquence, you have chanced to hit the nail on the head with your sledge-hammer. What would you say if I was to let you know that *Mr Kavanagh is a murderer already?*'

'I should say that you are a liar, and in point of fact I *do* say it,' answered Robert hotly.

'Very good; that shows your spirit. There have indeed been days—and not so long ago—when I would have shot a man dead for saying less; but let that pass. I want to come to an understanding with you, my lad, and not to quarrel; and besides, it is your very pluck that makes me wish, I don't say for your friendship, lest it should offend you, but your alliance. I must still request you to listen to me, even though you may disbelieve my assertions; but the proofs of what I say shall be forthcoming before you leave this room. *Mr Frank* Kavanagh had, as you know, a younger *brother Lewis;* they were born of the same [illegible]

but under circumstances that made the younger the heir, and the elder penniless. Mr Kavanagh, senior, did not marry his wife until after Frank's birth, whereby the boy was rendered illegitimate, though only a few persons were aware of the fact, either at that time or afterwards. The old man liked Frank best, as indeed did everybody; though wild and impulsive, he was generous and warm-hearted; and even the political scrapes he got into (which were very serious) seemed, in his father's eyes, who sympathized with their objects, but the result of youthful enthusiasm. To the tenants of the estate they endeared him; and even from Lewis they never received any direct discouragement (although he held aloof from them) until after the old man's death. It was not till long after Frank had grown up that his father revealed to him the fact of his illegitimacy, and I dare say the revelation did not help to sober him, or to heal the disagreements which already existed between his better-fortuned brother and himself. Of these latter, however, the old man was not very cognizant, or, at all events, attached to them less importance than they deserved. However his sons might differ in politics, he thought they would be loyal to one another; and especially that Lewis, who was always full of professions of duty and principle, would take care to see his wishes carried out with respect to Frank after his own death, just as if they had the force of law. He could indeed have left his elder son provided for in his will, but not without the exposure of the shame of his dead mother; so, in the presence of both his sons, and with Frank's full consent, he stated how he desired them to share his property. His English estate of Falston, which was

land, he gave to Lewis, who disliked the latter country, to which, on the other hand, his brother was devoted. To make up for this unequal distribution, and also because he foresaw that Frank's revolutionary tendencies might one day cause him to need ready money wherewith to make himself a home in the New World, he left him a large sum (which he always kept by him in notes at Falston, for the very purpose to which it was afterwards applied), as well as the estate in Tipperary. Lewis promised solemnly that this arrangement should hold good after his father's death, just as if it had been so devised by will; and so the brothers parted company, never, I believe, to meet again but *once*. Frank to recommence his desultory existence, made up of attempts at art, attempts at politics—assisted in the latter by the devotion of such poor tools as you see here. Frank Kavanagh was honest; his people were faithful, but they could not discover the way to the moon. Moreover, there were some people who objected even to the experiment being tried. His plots, harmless to the government, against which they were directed, were dangerous to himself; he had to use disguises, aliases, and houses that had back-doors to them; while Lewis lived with his father at Falston Hall, a model son, with an eye to the county magistracy. When the old man died, Frank was in hiding, and, as Lewis pretended, could not, therefore, be communicated with; but, at all events, the first hint he received of the fact was from the stoppage of his own allowance, followed by the information that his brother had taken possession of the whole paternal estate, as he had undoubtedly a legal *right to do*. On the same evening, Frank Kavanagh, *with Murphy*, rode down from town to Falston Hall.

What happened there, I can pretty well guess; but if you like to see the account of it as written by the penny-a-liners, here it is.' Maguire drew a newspaper from his breast-pocket, and threw it across the table. '*The murder at Falston Hall* is what they call it, you see.'

'I see,' gasped Robert, looking from that ghastly heading to the date of the newspaper, which was the same as that on which he had visited Herne Street. Oh, why, when Denton had offered it to him *then*, had he declined to read it?

'How you could be ignorant of what had taken place,' continued Maguire, 'was always a marvel to me; for if you had missed the papers, yet being in town, how could you have helped reading *this*, which was on every blank wall in London?'

From the same packet he took out a hand-bill, and spread it out upon the table:

£200 *REWARD.—The above reward will be paid for the apprehension of Frank Kavanagh, charged with the Wilful Murder of his brother, Lewis Kavanagh, of Falston Hall, Esquire.*

It was the same notice which had been pasted opposite to Robert's window at Mulvaney's, but of which he had only read the first few words when it was torn down by Murphy. Now the whole truth flashed upon him: the broadsheet seller of the previous night had proclaimed the full particulars, though the widow and he in the smoke-room had caught them but indistinctly: he had missed the name, and had taken for *suicide* what without doubt had been *fratricide*. Murphy had prevented

his going out to buy the broadsheet, and had invented an excuse for not obtaining it himself, in order to conceal the terrible truth. With Robert, who had had the encounter with the patrol in his mind, and had no suspicion of any other catastrophe, he had succeeded, even after the former had seen the hand-bill, since he set that down to the same account; but the widow he had been unable to deceive, and hence their quarrel respecting Kavanagh. She had been blind to his failings, tender to his faults, but she could not, like his faithful henchman, excuse his crimes. 'I don't wish to see him, Murphy,' she had said, when he had spoken of the young master's wishing her farewell, 'either here or elsewhere, but least of all under my own roof.' And the reason was now only too evident: she had shrunk from taking his blood-stained hand in hers. From the moment she knew that he had taken his brother's life, all regard for him had died out in her; or only just so much remained as prevented her from proclaiming his crime. To Robert she had maintained an icy silence, the coldness of which had not escaped his notice, though he had never guessed its cause.

CHAPTER XV.

MAGUIRE'S ULTIMATUM.

THE revelation of this view of his patron was to Robert in itself sufficiently overwhelming, but what *was still* more terrible was the reflection, 'And with *this man I* have cast in my lot, and not only mine,

but Lizzy's!' In the bitterness of his heart he groaned and bowed his face between his hands.

'Come, come, look up,' cried Maguire encouragingly; 'it is no use hiding one's head like an ostrich, to escape from an inevitable position. You called me a liar, you know, and that perhaps made me acquaint you with these little particulars more abruptly than was judicious. You believe me *now*, I suppose; or will do so when you have read that newspaper?'

'Take it away!' ejaculated Robert, with a gesture of loathing; 'I am convinced enough.'

'Now, that is what I call a proof of sense,' observed Maguire, in a congratulatory tone. 'The object of a newspaper writer is, of course, to harrow the feelings; and therefore, when you want any dramatic incident communicated to you in a delicate way, it is better to trust to a friend. What happened at Falston, stripped of cant and sensation, was, as I understand, something of this kind: the brothers had a private interview, in which Frank talked of his mother's memory and his father's dying wishes, and Lewis listened, not with very particular attention, his thoughts being probably entirely engrossed by his own affairs; but when the question was directly put to him, "Are you going to fulfil the promise that you gave our father in my presence, with regard to the distribution of his property, or do you intend to take the whole, since the law awards it you?" I have not the least doubt that he replied, with great distinctness, "I mean to take the whole." Perhaps he added (for he was a consummate hypocrite), that painful as it was to him to arrive at this determination, he had done so no less on public grounds than *private, inasmuch as he*

the state to intrust a man of "dear Frank's" revolutionary sentiments with the means to carry them into practical effect. At all events, whatever he said, he said too much. Frank's head had long been "going:" from a child, he was subject to paroxysms of passion, which, compared with what people call "temper," were as a tornado to a capful of wind; and of late years they had been growing worse and worse. He had begun to drink, too, though not to the extent that he drinks now. You must forgive him *that*, since it is done, I fancy, to drown the remembrance of the event which I am now about to relate, and for which he is so foolish as to entertain remorse. Well, being in this hot-headed state, and excessively exasperated, while the other was contemptuous and arrogant, there is no wonder that there were high words; then—I don't know who struck them first, that is a nice question for the lawyers—then blows. In the end ensued a dreadful rough-and-tumble, out of which Lewis never came at all, for he was left dead on the hearth-rug, with the front lock of his brother's hair in his hand, which he had torn up by the roots. The reason Frank always wears a skull-cap is to conceal that wound; and now you know why the officer at Liverpool was so careful to pass his hand over everybody's head who at all resembled Kavanagh. The disguise he had assumed as Denton, however, pulled him safely through that ordeal, which was fortunate for the inspector also, who would, without doubt, have shown his sagacity at the expense of his life. After the trouble and pains that Murphy and the rest of us had been at to get *the young* master safely on board the *Star*, and surrounded by his own friends, it is not likely that

would have let him be snatched from their hands at the moment of escape.'

'But he is not safe *now*,' ejaculated Robert: 'directly he disclosed who he was, he surely became liable to apprehension, even on board the *Star!*'

'No doubt,' observed Maguire grimly; 'if there had been anybody fool enough to apprehend him. It is more than likely, however, that the captain was himself ignorant of the serious character of Kavanagh's crime; and, at all events, he knew that he had become irresponsible for it.'

'Irresponsible for it! How could that be?'

'Because,' answered Maguire, leaning across the table, and speaking in hushed tones, 'the man is *mad*, mad as a March hare five days out of every six; and, when drunk, always mad. You saw him once yourself in the latter state, and thought it was D. T., I suppose. Well, so it was; but it was something else besides. He was going through the whole performance that took place at Falston, as he often does. "*There, there he stands with his strangled face!*" he cries. "*He struck me first; I'll swear it.*" And then, "*Help, help!*" the echo of the cry his brother gave, or perhaps his own terrified call to Murphy, when the knowledge of what he had done first forced itself upon him.'

'Poor miserable man!' exclaimed Robert pityingly.

'Well, no, not *poor*,' answered Maguire coolly. 'The one sensible thing that Frank Kavanagh ever did, or rather which (as I shrewdly guess) Murphy did for him, was to carry off from Falston Hall that parcel of bank-notes which his father had designed for him, and [illegible] in his desk ready for an [illegible] through

he little guessed of what sort the emergency would be. I believe this amounted to many thousand pounds, from which we on *Murphy's Island* have already reaped the benefit.'

'You think, then, that Mr Frank was mad, or nearly so, before the aggravation of his brother's meanness made him lose all command over himself and commit this terrible deed?' observed Robert, shocked by the revelation of his patron's crime, and genuinely anxious to believe him guiltless of it.

'I believe he was always crack-brained,' answered Maguire coolly ('though his friends used to call it enthusiasm), and that the fissure has been growing wider and wider.'

'And yet,' urged Robert, 'on all occasions on which I have seen him, save one, he has appeared sane enough.'

'You have seen him in lucid intervals, and besides, the voyage itself greatly benefited him for the time; but since he has been ashore here, matters have been infinitely worse: remorse and drink together have undermined the remainder of his wits, and they have fallen in, higgledy-piggledy.'

'Then, if he was to be sent for from England, and taken prisoner, you don't think he could'—Robert hesitated, for he did not forget that Kavanagh had been uniformly kind to him, and had trusted to his bare word in the weightiest matters

'Don't think he could be *hanged?* you were going to say, man. No, he could not be hanged, if that is any sort of satisfaction to you. But what interests me *greatly* more than that far-off contingency is, how his *madness is* likely to affect us in the mean time. The

is no lunatic asylum on Murphy's Island; and if there were, it would be as much as our lives were worth to attempt to shut him up in it. For Murphy will never believe, even when he sees him raving, that his master is anything more than a little eccentric, and would obey his wildest mandate rather than the advice of the sagest of men; while as for the tag-rag and bob-tail over at the harbour yonder, they will believe anything that Murphy tells them. For all we know, when the fit is on him, Kavanagh may give orders for our immediate execution, as indeed has happened to one poor wretch already.'

'You don't mean to say that he put a man to death?' exclaimed Robert in horrified accents.

'Indeed, I do, though. He was tried by a sort of court-martial for trying to make off with the "gig"—it is now made a capital offence, by-the-by, to leave the island without Kavanagh's permission—and they strung him up in front of Government House. As it happened, it was only a Tipperary boy, but it might have been you or me. Well, all this brings me round to the matter which I had in my mind when I brought you over to New Town. The people here are not quite such fools as they are at the harbour; *there*, the boys are so entirely under Murphy's thumb, that they did not dare to whisper to you that the governor was ill, whereas *here*, you were informed of it, as you remember, readily enough; and, moreover, I am glad to say, they have had a disagreement with one another. Now, "When fools quarrel, wise men come by their own," says the proverb, or something to that effect. And now perhaps you see at what I have been driving?'

'Not exactly; no, I confess I don't,' said Robert suspiciously. His former interest in, and even regard for, Maguire was indeed swept away. The circumstances in which they were now placed no longer admitted of his looking upon that personage as a harmless nonentity: the calm and almost approving manner in which he had narrated this story of Cain and Abel had shocked the lad to the core; what he had taken for candour in the man, he now perceived to be an unblushing recklessness; he feared his sanity almost as much as Kavanagh's madness.

'You are duller than you are wont to be, Master Chesney,' observed Maguire. 'Why, is it not clear that you and I are the only two men on this island with brains in their head, save one who has them muddled? If this madman and his man were out of the way, the rest, look you, would be our subjects.'

'Granting that,' answered Robert quietly, 'for the sake of the argument: how do you propose to persuade Mr Kavanagh and Murphy to leave the island?'

'I think I *could* persuade them,' answered Maguire with a cold smile. 'At all events, you may leave that matter to me. I have influence with both factions, and you are not disliked by either; moreover, you will have the advantage of such authority as Kavanagh may leave behind him. Why should we not make alliance and reign together peaceably over this little territory? I don't pretend to conceal from you that if you had more spirit, or had not been spoilt by a mawkish bringing-up, that I should have proposed a bolder game—such as I very nearly persuaded Kavanagh to play.'

'*You* would have revived the days you spent on

board the *Mother Carey*, on shore, I presume?' said Robert in as indifferent a tone as he could compass.

'I would, by Heaven!' answered Maguire roundly. 'We could have had our own ship in yonder harbour, and done a good trade, of which no one would have suspected us; and when folks in little vessels dropped in upon us by accident, we should have welcomed them so warmly that they would never have gone away. But you are not fit for such bold strokes, so I think of them no longer. We must be content to call this isle our own, and to have no masters, which is no small thing in these days. You, I hear, are expecting your sweetheart from England'——In spite of himself, here Robert could not repress a shudder; how terrible had the bare idea become of bringing his Lizzy to such a spot; too horrible even to think of, but that he had already formed a plan in his own mind by which such a catastrophe should be averted.

'Well, I have also fixed my affections upon a young lass from King's County,' continued Maguire; 'to be sure they are not at present returned, but no doubt they will be, when I can call myself co-governor. Altogether, the prospect seems to me very fair and promising for us both, but especially for yourself, who are far the younger man, and will have the sole command when I am under-ground, or feeding the fishes. So stands my offer, lad, in return for your alliance. I regret to add—but then it is so much better to be explicit—that if you should decline it, there is an unpleasant reverse to the picture. I have still the ear of the governor, when at least he can be got to listen to anybody, and also the confidence of Murphy; and I

have only to whisper that this ambitious scheme has sprung from your own head, instead of mine, to make you dance in the air in front of Government House. Just think over the whole matter, lad, and then answer me "Yes" or "No."' Here Maguire lit his pipe, leant back in his chair, and began to occupy himself with the newspaper, so as not to interfere with his young friend's deliberations. Robert had already made up his mind as to his future course of conduct, but he thought it better to appear undecided, and to temporize as much as possible.

'Indeed, Mr Maguire,' returned he, after a considerable pause, 'all that you have told me is so strange and unlooked-for, that I must be forgiven for saying that I can promise nothing until I have satisfied myself of the facts you have narrated with my own eyes and ears. Until I have convinced myself that Mr Kavanagh *is* mad, I don't see how you can reasonably expect me to deny him my allegiance.'

'That would be well enough in a believer in the Divine Right of kings,' observed Maguire carelessly, 'but in a person of such delicate moral scruples as yourself, the fact of his having committed a double murder ought to weigh somewhat, I should have thought, against his authority. However, there is no hurry about anything in *Murphy's Island*, and you have only to see its governor, to be convinced of what I have told you about him. Preserve your decision till to-morrow, or the next day, for that matter, and then tell me frankly whether we are to be friends or foes.' The tone of the speaker was still one of conciliation; but he spoke with knitted brows, and with the air of one who is putting a strong restraint upon

himself; moreover, there was a suspicious searching glance in his keen gray eyes, that bespoke but little confidence in the decision, which he had requested, proving favourable to his views.

'Well,' added he, rising, 'I shall now leave you to make yourself at home in your new house. You will be over at the harbour before night, I dare say; and in the mean time, good-bye to you.'

CHAPTER XVI.

THE CONSTITUTION.

Yes; Robert certainly intended to be over at the harbour before night. It was his fixed resolve to seek an interview with Kavanagh as soon as might be, and whether he found him in the condition Maguire had described or not, to take passage to Melbourne the next morning by the ship that had brought him thence. With a murderer, whether sane or mad, he would have no part nor lot, and above all, he would take care that Lizzy should never set foot upon that perilous shore. The only doubt now left in his mind as to his future conduct was whether he should acquaint the authorities in Australia with the state of affairs on Murphy's Island. In justice to its colonists, now subject to the caprices of a mad despot, and fated in all probability to become the prey of an unscrupulous schemer, it was clearly his duty so to do; and yet he shrank from the ingratitude that such an act would involve, for how

could he describe what had occurred without denouncing his benefactor and patron! As to acceding to the infamous proposition of Maguire, his nature revolted at it. He believed that the man's hint of being able to 'persuade' Kavanagh and his faithful follower to quit the island, meant nothing less than that they were to be put to death; and even if he could have been so base and vile a traitor, he had little doubt that he himself, having served his confederate's selfish ends, would in turn have become his victim.

In order to give his late companion ample time to precede him to the harbour, rather than with any interest in the investigation itself, he went over his little home, and was both surprised and touched to find in it many indications both of the good-will and generosity of Kavanagh. The furniture, and even the decorations, of the saloon cabins of the *Star*, had evidently been laid under lavish contribution to supply his needs; and if Government House should prove to be equipped proportionally to the residence of the second in command, its interior at least would not greatly belie its ambitious designation. For his own part, however, he was to reap no advantage from this splendour, which also filled him with remorseful tenderness towards him by whose forethought it had been provided. With a heavy heart he left the house, and was at once surrounded by such of the population of New Town—mostly women and children—as the news of the arrival of the stores had not attracted to the other settlement. Among the former, he noticed the black-eyed, gipsy-faced young girl from King's County, upon whom *Maguire* had deigned to bestow his to-be-one-day enviable affections. Robert had noticed her himself on

board the *Star*, not only from her beauty, but because of the likeness to the 'Miss Mary' of Herne Street, whom (although she was much younger) in her general appearance she greatly resembled. Her age could not have much exceeded sixteen, and she had still about her all the glow and radiance of childhood. His heart sunk within him as he heard her merry laugh, and listened to her thoughtless words, for the reflection forced itself upon him:—'If I should spare Kavanagh, will it not be eventually at the sacrifice of this bright and innocent girl?'

Escaping from the questions and welcomings of the throng as soon as he could, he breasted the central hill, resolving to take that way to the harbour, in preference to the shorter and easier road by which he had come, in order to avoid the possibility of overtaking Maguire, whose companionship he now felt to be intolerable. At the summit, he paused, not for breath, for the elevation to his young limbs and lungs was insignificant enough, but to survey the ocean, which had of late acquired an interest for him which it had lacked before. 'In three months' time,' thought he, 'or four at furthest, the ship that brings my darling to the home I trust I shall by that time have made for her, will be speeding yonder on her course.' And even while he looked, his heart bounded within him, for there, in truth, but a few miles off, there *was* a ship, and steering, so far as he could judge, for Melbourne. The next moment he blushed at his own folly, for how *could* it be the ship in question, since even that which carried his summons to the Alstons had not yet arrived in England! However, taking out a pocket-glass with which he had provided himself in Melbourne,

he scanned the vessel with some interest, which increased as he gazed to intense excitement. He was not much versed in seamanship, but surely, surely that was the very sloop in which he had himself arrived but a few hours ago! The harbour was concealed under the hill, but he ran forward quickly until he could command it, and then his worst suspicions were confirmed: the sloop which it had been definitely arranged was to have waited until the morrow, was already gone!

It was for this, then, perhaps, that he had been enticed to visit New Town! His idea of taking passage at once to Melbourne had been anticipated, whether by Maguire or others, and thus forestalled. If it was so, the misfortune was indeed overwhelming, for how could he warn Lizzy of her danger in coming to the island? Had it been arranged that the mail was to bring her, he could have carried her on to Melbourne in it, despite all opposition; but the crew of this little sloop could not control the force that the islanders could bring against them, and being in the pay of Kavanagh, were of course subject to his orders. Indeed, it must be in obedience to them that they had now altered their intention of remaining the night, and set sail for home.

The pinnace, it is true, and the gig still lay in harbour; but the former needed at least three men to navigate her; and the latter was a mere cockleshell, quite unfit to face the open sea. Moreover, had it not been enacted that it was death to embark in either of them without Kavanagh's express permission, a penalty, which, unless Maguire had told a falsehood capable *of immediate* refutation, had been already carried out *to its extremity*. His position, under ever-

was indeed growing gloomy and serious, and it was with a heavy heart that Robert resumed his way towards the harbour. For the present, he was alone in his peril; how much more terrible would the situation be if Lizzy should arrive to share his fate—perchance his doom!

'Government House,' though a structure of absurdly insignificant size to have so grand a title, was a well-built and compact edifice; it was two stories high, and contained eight rooms, yet every piece of timber of which it was composed had a number and place of its own, and fitted into its neighbour piece like the joints of a child's puzzle. In Australia, though house-room might be dear, and difficult to obtain, this costly toy—which was painted and fitted up with infinite elaborateness—would have been out of place, if not superfluous, and only have ministered to its possessor's vanity; but on Murphy's Island, by a singular chance, it had found its proper function. Contrasted with the tents around it, and with the more humble dwellings which were already being erected at the harbour out of the timber which Robert had brought over with him from Melbourne, and with the gay banner floating from its flagstaff, it had a lordly, if not a sovereign air. Moreover, as though in mimicry of royal state, one of the Tipperary 'boys,' pike in hand, was strutting sentrywise to and fro in front of its door.

'Is the master within, Tim?' asked Robert of this consequential personage, with whom, of course, he was well acquainted.

'He's in, sir; yes. But Murphy says that he can be seen by none of his people.'

'But that does not [illegible] I suppose?' said

Robert persuasively. 'Besides, I have important matters to transact with him, Tim.'

Tim lowered his pike, scratched his head with the point of it, and deliberated gravely within himself. He had had his orders, but were they to be put in effect with respect to the master's own lieutenant?

'Well, you can just step in, Mr Chesney, and ask him yourself whether he wishes you to be admitted or not.'

Without stopping to question Tim's logic, Robert opened the door, and stepped within. The atmosphere, charged with tobacco-smoke, and tinctured with the smell of spirits, reminded him of the little room at Mulvaney's; it didn't smell like a new house at all, though everything to the eye was spick and span.

'Who's that?' inquired a harsh voice from above-stairs. Then Murphy's shock-head appeared over the banisters. 'Oh, it's you, Mr Chesney,' added he in a hoarse whisper. 'The master is ill, sir, and can't be seen.'

'Come up!' roared another voice from an upper room, in such excited tones, that Robert hardly recognized them as belonging to Kavanagh. 'Come up hither, and bring another bottle of whiskey, Robert, for we are half through this one already.'

Murphy, as usual, at once withdrew his opposition to his master's wishes, and only held up his fore-finger, in warning of Robert knew not what, as the latter obeyed the summons.

In a front room, handsomely furnished, and close to a round table on which were glasses and a bottle, sat *Frank Kavanagh*, looking years older than when Chesney had seen him last, and with that blotched

flush upon his face which, unlike that resulting from fresh air and exercise, suggests a protracted and deep debauch. His eyes were bloodshot, and regarded the new-comer without disfavour indeed, but without a particle of the interest that under the circumstances might have been expected; and his dishevelled hair, no longer covered by a skull-cap, displayed above the forehead a bald scar, the sight of which sent a shudder through Robert's frame; for was it not the mark of Cain!

'Sit down, lad.—Dick, bring a fresh glass,' exclaimed Kavanagh. 'Well, thank Heaven, that sloop's gone, and here we are all alone once more in our own little island!' Then, breaking out into a song:

'Oh, it's a bright little island—
A right little, tight little island!
Search the globe round, none can be found
So happy as this little island.'

'I hope it may be a happy one, sir,' observed Robert quietly.

'Hope, lad! I say it *is*, and I'm master here, I believe.—Isn't that so, Dick?'

'True for you,' answered Murphy gravely; 'you're the king of us all, sure.'

'Then why does this mealy-mouthed gentleman talk about his *hopes?*' resumed the other with irritation. 'If my people are not happy here, I'll know the reason why. And, look you, happy or not, they shall go nowhere else'—he brought his fist down on the table with an emphasis that made the glasses ring again—'nowhere else, so help me Heaven, save to the dickens.—Fishing? No; they shall not so much as fish, unless I give them my royal permission so to do. That was [illegible] Pat Doolan [illegible] the others

not to go fishing in the gig without my leave. And as for the pinnace, it is never to be used without my written order, my imperial ukase. You're my second in command, sir, so look to *that*.' The tragic air and stilted manner of the speaker were such as would have fitted the mock-sovereign of a burlesque, or some self-satisfied inmate of the walls of Bedlam; but there was a certain significance in his words, too, that jarred upon his hearer worse than their mere jangling wildness. This tirade about the boats, as it struck Robert, was intended to apply to his own case, and serve as a personal warning.

'I shall obey your directions, sir, of course,' answered he respectfully. 'But as for quitting the island, as I suppose you hint at, that would not be very practicable in the gig, at all events; and to hang a man for going out to fish seems to me to be hard measure.'

'Seems to you?' answered Kavanagh menacingly. 'And what is that to *me*? When I ask my minister's opinion, he may give it; but not unasked. The power of life and death is the king's prerogative. Murphy and I are drawing up the statutes of the island, and that is the first article of our constitution. To speak against the king, or to discuss his acts with strangers, has been also made a capital offence. We put them in after Pat's death, lest the crew of the sloop should come to hear of it, and that exercise of my undoubted authority be subsequently questioned elsewhere. It is a great power, look you, lad, and makes one draw a proud breath to be able to say "Death" to any man who doesn't suit one's fancy. To open to him, *as it were* by a word, the gates of Eternity. Yes, yes. *The mischief* is, however,' added the speaker, with a

puzzled air, 'that one can't get the fellow back again when one wishes it. And one does wish it sometimes, oh, one *does*.' His head drooped gently on his hand, his tones became soft and tender, and his feverish eyes filled with tears. 'I had a brother once, lad; we were boys together; I can remember saying my prayers with him at our mother's knee. But he would take out the boat and fish, contrary to our express injunction; and—the king must administer justice quite indifferently, you know—and poor Lewis paid for it with his life.—Didn't he, Dick?'

The tone of his appeal was very sad and touching, but not more so than the expression of Murphy's answering look. It seemed to say, 'Oh, what has happened to my beloved master? His wild words make me tremble to hear them, and yet I will never, never, never think him mad!'

'Don't talk of *that*, Mr Frank,' answered the other cheerfully. 'Let us speak of other things. You have never said a word to Mr Chesney, you know, respecting his stay in Melbourne, and the cargo he brought over with him.'

'Yes, indeed, sir,' observed Robert, 'I should wish to account to you, as soon as you have the leisure, for the money intrusted to me. I have expended nearly the whole of it, but I hope in such a manner as you will approve.'

'Yes, yes; I have seen it all, and I do approve. There is whiskey enough to supply our royal cellar for —well, one week at least. That is why the man keeps guard over us with a pike—to keep off thieves, and to knock in the head of a cask whenever it is wanted. *Isn't that so, Dick?*'

Murphy muttered some inarticulate reply, which, by the cheerful nod that accompanied it, would seem to be in the affirmative; but that devoted follower was evidently in sad straits.

'By-the-by, Robert,' continued Kavanagh, his changeful manner, which had been fierce, pathetic, and humorously cynical by turns, becoming suddenly delicately courteous, 'you have spoken of the cargo, but not of the passengers. You have not said one word about your Lizzy. Why did you not bring her here to see me? I wish above all things to welcome my friend's wife to *Murphy's Island*, and especially to introduce her to Mary. The Governor's wife, you know, must call upon the Deputy-governor's, that is a constitutional necessity. She will go in state, upon a white elephant, if the animal is procurable. But in the mean time the young women should be friends. You have seen my Mary, of course?'

'Yes,' replied Robert, hesitating; 'but I did not know'—he was going to add, 'that she was on the island,' when Kavanagh broke in triumphantly,

'There! he has seen her, Murphy, with his own eyes; and yet you try to persuade me that she is not at New Town. Go away, Dick, go away, and leave me with Mr Chesney, to arrange our pecuniary accounts, about which your poor stupid head can understand nothing.—The poor fellow is losing what little wits he has, Chesney, and positively tries to persuade me that my own Mary, who has followed me here so faithfully from England, is a girl from King's County. A pretty thing, indeed, that a man should not know *his own sweetheart*. And there were others too—that *fellow Maguire* for one—who were in the same tale.'

But yours is independent testimony. Hush! not a word; I thank you for it. Empty titles are not to be created under my dynasty; but I give you in reward a solid privilege. You shall go fishing in the gig within the circuit of half a mile, to which our jurisdiction extends.—Put that down, Murphy; it shall form the seventeenth article of the constitution. But there, you cannot write. Give *me* the parchment. Given at the Government House—that is our royal style—&c. &c. There, you are free to take the boat and fish, provided only, that if you should catch sturgeon, it must be reserved for our own table.'

During all this rodomontade, Robert maintained a respectful silence; he had endeavoured to explain the mistake into which Kavanagh had fallen with respect to 'Miss Mary;' but the former had refused to listen to it; and was it now worth while (even if it was possible) to set this poor madman right in so absurd a matter, especially, too, as the misunderstanding had brought forth such welcome fruit? For in the gig could he not go forth and *meet* the sloop, and thereby avert all danger from her it should bring; since on his report it would, of course, put back to Melbourne, whence help could then be sent, if necessary, to the distracted island. On the other hand, Robert perceived that he had deeply offended Murphy. Not only had he brought upon him—itself an unforgivable injury—his master's wrath; but instead of doing his best to mitigate Kavanagh's hallucinations, he had pretended to acquiesce in them—or at least in one of them—in order to reap what must have seemed a very trifling advantage. The pair had never been *real friends, but up to this time* the contempt had

always been on Chesney's side, while the other monopolized the hate. But now Murphy's scowling face exhibited not only the most furious hostility, but the bitterest scorn.

'You vile young viper!' cried he, 'to bite the hand that has fed you. I'll'——

'Silence!' roared Kavanagh. 'How dare you use such words to the Deputy-governor! Have I not placed him over you, you dog, you cur'—and as though poor Dick had been indeed the creature by whose name he was thus addressed, he winced and shrank from every word as from a lash—'and is this the reverence you pay to an officer of my choosing? Be off—be off, I say, or I will set it down in the constitution that to call the Deputy-governor "a vile young viper" is to have earned death.' With a subdued though still sullen air Murphy raised his hand to his head—a form of respect enjoined, as Robert rightly guessed, by the new constitution to its founder—and slowly left the room.

'Discipline must be maintained,' sighed Kavanagh regretfully; 'but it would cause me intense regret to be compelled to hang Dick Murphy. I tell you *what*' —and here his look became intensely cunning—'we'll make a statute that the Governor's wife shall always possess the right of pardon, and then, thanks to Mary, we shall be extricated out of all these little embarrassments. I am so glad you recognized her, my dear lad; for not to be recognized, is, in society, a very serious annoyance.—And now about these accounts —fill your glass—well, then, *I* will; and, sparing us *the details* (which are always tedious), tell us what is *the gross* surplus.'

'There is about eighty pounds remaining, sir. But here are the papers, with every item'——

'Very good; an auditor' (with a wave of his hand) 'shall look into them in due time, and I have no doubt will find them correct. As for the eighty pounds, I shall give them to Murphy, whose feelings, I could see, were hurt.'

'You will remember, sir,' urged Robert, 'that I have still in my possession untouched the three thousand pounds with which you intrusted me on board the *Star*.'

'Yes, yes; quite right—you must keep that. I am better, much better now in health; but the necessity may still arise for expending it in the manner suggested. The cares of my high office may be too much for me. Do you know, lad' (he laid his hand in his old familiar manner on Robert's arm, and sunk his voice to a whisper), 'I sometimes think my brain is failing me? Suppose the Governor was to go mad like George III.! Don't you think that should be provided for in the constitution?'

Robert bent his head: he knew not what to say. He was ashamed of his own hypocrisy, and yet what could he do but temporize and affect acquiescence. It was clear that Maguire had not exaggerated Kavanagh's condition, which, moreover, was probably much worse than when he had last appeared in public; nothing, indeed, but the slavish affection of Murphy could be proof against the conviction that his master was a madman. And yet in this man's hands were intrusted the destinies, even to life and death, of all upon the island! These reflections were of a nature to make Robert in earnest for speech, and Kavanagh ran

on with his wild words, not only without contradiction, but without interruption. 'In case anything should happen to me, Mary, it is true, might be regent; but it is so difficult for a woman to maintain order, when there are revolutionary elements at work; and (between ourselves) they *are* at work even now. No; you, Robert, will be the interim governor, and will also succeed me, in case of my dying without issue. This is very important, and must be entered in the constitution before a witness.' The speaker opened the door, and called for Murphy, who rose from the rug outside, on which he had been disconsolately lying, to execute this pressing duty.

The whole interview would have been most distressing to Robert, were it not that pity for his patron was overborne by the gravest considerations for the future, both for himself and others. When it was over—that is, so soon as he could decently make his escape—he once more ascended the cone-shaped hill, which, with the exception of his own vice-regal two-roomed residence, was the only spot on the whole island where he could obtain even comparative privacy. The summit was a level flat of a few feet square, and lying down on this, with the sky above him, the sea around him, he could fancy himself alone in the world. Standing up, on the other hand, he could not only survey all that insular domain (except what was hidden by the hill itself, which on the harbour side was somewhat precipitous), but could himself be seen from every part of it. Not a tree, not a bush was there to intercept the view; nothing higher than a grass blade, save *the few vegetables* that already rewarded the industry *of the colonists*, appeared above the soil of Murphy's

Island. Even now the home of madness and treachery, and fated, perhaps, to witness as dark deeds as any spot beneath the sun, the place was already become abhorrent to him. He swept the horizon in hopes to see a sail (he cared not what, nor whence it came), with the feverish longing of a shipwrecked man whose scanty store is lessening fast: but, as his heart foreboded, he looked in vain. The *Star* had been blown much out of her course, or it would never have chanced upon the island, which lay too far to the south-east to be in the track of the Australian traders; the little chart which he spread out before him told him that much; his only hope lay in the comparatively small direct Tasmanian traffic, the ships engaged in which, however, could be seen, if at all, from New Town. He would watch for them night and day, and if seen, do his best to attract their notice. To-morrow, he would propose to Kavanagh that a flagstaff should be placed upon the hill, with a banner flying to proclaim his sovereignty. While pondering in his mind upon these things, he was suddenly startled by a low and sullen roar, followed by a perceptible movement of the air, which seemed to be that of the earth itself. He had heard a royal salute fired from Windsor Castle, so that he recognized this at once for the report of a heavy gun. Leaping to his feet, he once more looked eagerly around, for the sound had seemed to come from no particular quarter, expecting to descry the smoke. But there was no smoke to be seen. He saw the New Town people running along the shore, and presently others from the harbour meeting them, each party, as he rightly guessed, believing that the vessel came from the *opposite side* of the island to that on which

they were. The whole population, of late so depressed and sluggish, seemed to have wakened into life, clustering together in dark masses, and with a murmurous hum, like bees. They too, perhaps, would have gladly hailed the arrival of a stranger strong enough to overbear the authority of Kavanagh, whose severity in the case of Doolan had alarmed them. It was a proof of their simplicity that only one of them thought of ascending the hill, from which their curiosity, if at all, could have been satisfied at once. Robert did not need his glass to be convinced that this personage was Maguire.

CHAPTER XVII.

ARRESTED.

'So you are on the look-out, Mr Chesney, with your map and your glass,' said Maguire, when he had come up to Robert's side, 'in hopes to see a friendly sail.'

He spoke in a dry cynical tone that was habitual to him, but the expression of his face was less grim than usual, though not more genial: it was grave, set, and determined.

'I am looking, like other people,' answered Robert carelessly, 'for the ship that fired that gun.'

'Yes,' answered the other contemptuously; 'and you were also wishing that you had a white table-cloth *to wave, or* a pile of wood to fire, in order to attract *her attention.*'

'Why not?' inquired Robert coolly; 'all sails are friendly to us here, I suppose.'

'To you perhaps they may be; but not to him who rules this island for the nonce, nor to him'—and he struck his own broad breast with his hand—'who is about to rule it. No ship shall land here with *my* leave; be sure of *that;* and woe be to the man who brings one hither.'

'I did not know that the island was provided with such heavy batteries, and that you had the command of them,' observed Robert with heightened colour. 'As to your menace—if you intend it to be a personal one—it is thrown away upon me.'

'Ho, ho! so you have already made up your mind upon the subject we discussed awhile ago. We are to be enemies, are we, Robert Chesney?'

'We are not to be friends, Maguire; if at least you are so free with your threats,' answered Robert boldly. 'You may kill me—and you look this moment as if you would like to do it—but be sure of this, you shall never bully me. If I had a flag here, I would wave it—if I had a bonfire here, I would light it, though it were to be the last movement of my hand.'

'What a pity that I shall some day have to kill you, Chesney, if you let your courage so far outstrip your wits,' said Maguire, not without some admiring pity. 'It is lucky for you that both you and those poor fools yonder are alike in error respecting the sound you have just heard. That was no ship's gun, my lad, as you imagine, but an earthquake shock. In the China seas I have heard such more than once, though never in these latitudes.—You doubt me? Well, if it be a ship, then, you may signal her, and may I swing at her yard-arm!'

'An earthquake shock!' answered Robert wonderingly. 'Well, it is true I thought I felt the island tremble.'

'And you were right, lad. I have told you the explanation of that; now, why not be taught by me in other matters? Did I deceive you as to the condition of Kavanagh? Is he not stark staring mad? Are not our lives hanging on a mere thread while we submit ourselves to his tyrannical caprices?'

'All that is true,' said Robert firmly. 'But I will not have him harmed, that is, as *you* would harm him.'

'You would rather let him kill you than kill *him*, perhaps?' observed Maguire significantly. 'And yet,' added he, when the other made no answer, 'I have heard it said you once drew a knife upon a man yourself.'

'On Murphy: yes. But I had no other means whereby to defend my life.'

'Oh! that was it,' said Maguire carelessly. 'I thought you had a slighter reason. Well, our intelligent friends yonder have hit, I see, at last upon the idea of using the hill as a look-out; and as I don't want to have to explain to them the phenomena of earthquakes, I shall be off; so good-evening.'

He nodded, and moved slowly away towards the harbour. Unconcerned as he strove to appear, Robert knew that Maguire felt baffled, angry, and evilly disposed towards himself; that he had made his last effort to win him over to his views, and was now resolved to act without him—perhaps against him. Full of serious thoughts and apprehensions, Robert felt as little *inclined for* chatter as his late companion, and went *down the hill* to his own house. Instigated by some

presentiment of danger to those precious treasures, he dug up the flooring of his bed-room, and hid beneath it his map, his telescope, and also a little pocket-compass he had purchased in Melbourne; then feeling that he had taken all the poor precautions that were within his power, he lit his pipe, to think and ponder once again. Before it was smoked out, there came a knock at the door, and Tim appeared at it, pike in hand.

'You're wanted,' said he, 'at the harbour.'

The curtness of the man's manner, and the absence of the 'Sir' which he had used but a few hours ago, would have suggested to Robert that there was something amiss, even had there not been at Tim's back two other men, also with pikes, presenting on the whole a far from friendly looking embassy.

'Why, what's the matter, Tim?' inquired Robert good-naturedly.

'That you must answer to the master—I mean the Governor,' was the gruff reply. 'I'm to bring you to him, and these are to stay here and search about.'

When Tim and his prisoner were on their way together to the Government House, however, the former relaxed in his sternness, and became more communicative. Maguire, it appeared, had impeached Robert to Kavanagh, accusing him of a design to attract strangers to the island, for the purpose of destroying his authority; and the poor mad Governor was more beside himself than ever with fury.

'Bedad, if it's proved against you, he'll string you up just as he did Pat Doolan,' was Tim's fixed opinion, in which Robert himself was obliged to concur: and if that was to happen, what would *then* become of *Lizzy, left on Murphy's Island* without even the protec-

tion of his slender arm! This reflection, however, instead of paralyzing him, seemed to nerve him with courage, and if it did not sharpen his wits, determined him at least to exercise them without scruple. He had a barbed arrow in his quiver, which, if the worst came to the worst, he would let fly at Maguire's own breast, be the issue to that traitor what it might.

In front of Government House there was a little crowd assembled, that made way for him with a pitying murmur; and what was far more ominous, there projected from one of its front windows a stout pole, from the end of which a rope was already dangling, the same, no doubt, which had cut short poor Doolan's mortal coil.

CHAPTER XVIII.

HIGH TREASON.

Robert was ushered by Tim into the same room wherein he had been before admitted, but which now presented a somewhat different appearance. Upon the round table, on which bottle and glasses were still standing, had been hoisted an arm-chair, and in this elevated seat was Kavanagh, holding in his hand, by way of symbol of sovereignty, a wooden ruler, which he waved, as Robert entered, with a majestic air. By *his side stood* Murphy, with a drawn sword; and in a *corner of the* room, in an empty tea-chest, which came

up to his hips, and supplied the place of a witness-box, stood Maguire—both with the gravest faces, as of persons impressed with a due reverence for judicial ceremonial. Perilous as he felt his position to be, Robert could hardly maintain his gravity at this ludicrous spectacle; though the black beam projecting from the window, and the murmur of hushed expectancy that came up from the crowd below, might well have quenched the mirth of a braver man.

'Robert Chesney,' observed the Governor, in a solemn voice, marred, however, by an occasional hiccup, 'you are accused of endeavouring to bring upon us a foreign power, thereby to subvert our authority; an offence contrary to the constitution, and which by it is punishable with death. It is my hope, dearly beloved cousin, and second only to ourselves, as you are, within this realm, that you may clear yourself of this hateful charge. But if otherwise, you shall pay the penalty, like the meanest. There stands your accuser!' And Kavanagh pointed to the occupant of the tea-chest with his ruler, and drained a glass of whiskey to the dregs.

Then Maguire repeated so much of the conversation Robert had held with him on the hill as referred to the ship, erroneously expected, adding certain expressions, or aspirations, to which the young fellow had never given utterance, but that really gave a certain treasonous aspect to what had been said, well fitted to inflame a tyrant's suspicions. The very repetition of his story, in fact, evidently aroused Kavanagh's jealousy and alarm, and at its conclusion it was with an impatient gesture that he motioned to the [illegible] bade him say what he had to [illegible]

'*Much of that* [illegible]

Robert firmly, 'is a malicious lie; but as to my saying that I intended to hail the ship, if such it had proved to be, I did say so; nor did I know—nor do I—that I should have done wrong in so doing.'

'Death, by article nineteen of the constitution,' observed Kavanagh hastily. 'Get ready the rope there.'

'Am I to be punished, sir,' pleaded the unhappy lad, 'for transgressing a law of which I was wholly ignorant.'

'It's the same in the British constitution, my good fellow,' observed Kavanagh cheerfully.

'That may be, sir; but the one that you have so wisely framed upon its model should not copy its faults. Doubtless, all the rest of your subjects have been made acquainted with this admirable document, whereas I alone, when it was proclaimed, was absent from the island upon business of your own and of the state.'

Kavanagh shook his head.

'*De minimis non curat lex*,' said he: 'we can't take notice of these little matters. Are you acquainted with any just cause or impediment——No; that's not it. Have you any reason to offer'—and here he put on his black skull-cap, like a judge who is about to award the last penalty of the law—'why sentence of death should not be passed upon you?'

'Yes,' answered Robert boldly, 'I have a state secret—the revelation of which may well earn for me my life at your hands—and which I pray you to let me whisper in your ear.'

'Whisper in my ear?—how the deuce can he do *that, Murphy?* I'm too high up. This has not been *provided for* in the constitution.'

A stool, however, was brought, and Robert, ascending it, spoke a few words earnestly to Kavanagh in a low tone. They seemed to affect him in an extreme degree.

'Tim!' cried he to the sentinel excitedly, 'go to New Town, and fetch our royal consort, Mary Becher.'

Tim scratched his head; the mandate being unintelligible to him, as it well might be.

'It's Mary Beamish that the Governor means,' observed Dick in explanation.

'*It's not!*' roared Kavanagh, in a transport of fury. —'What do *you* say, Robert? *You* know it's Mary Becher, don't you?'

Robert assented eagerly: he would have recognized her with equal facility as Mary de' Medici, Mary of Burgundy, or Mary Queen of Scots.

'*Now* I know who are the traitors!' exclaimed Kavanagh, looking reproachfully at Murphy, and then casting an angry glance upon Maguire, who, indeed, if to grow pale and red by turns is to be of doubtful loyalty, exhibited very traitorous symptoms. 'But nevertheless let the crime be proved.'

Here the door opened and admitted Mary Beamish, whom Tim had found in the crowd without, all the inhabitants of New Town having by this time congregated thither at the news of Robert's impeachment. She was a pretty brunette enough, and the slight paleness caused by her alarm at this unexpected summons mitigated her somewhat too rosy charms.

'We sent for you, Mary,' explained Kavanagh with elaborate courtesy, 'to know from your own lips whether that man yonder'—pointing to Maguire—'has ever ventured to abuse your ear by protestations of affection? Speak the truth, and fear not.'

Mary hung her head and blushed.

'Mr Maguire has courted me,' faltered she; 'but'——

'Ah! you concealed the matter that the wretch might keep his life,' interrupted Kavanagh.

'Well, sir,' continued the puzzled girl, 'I thought him too old and too ugly.'

'Most faithful of women!' ejaculated Kavanagh admiringly, 'you have said enough.—Tim, remove our consort.—What ho! without there; get the rope ready! Maguire shall swing. Executioner, do your duty.'

Maguire turned deadly pale, and thrust his hand into his breast: but the weapon that he looked for was not there. He had come unarmed to a council where affairs, as he thought, could never have taken a turn so perilous to himself. Murphy was advancing towards him with a rope to pinion his wrists, when Robert suddenly interposed. He certainly owed this man no favour, but the idea of his being put to death at his instigation was abhorrent to him.

'I humbly beg, sir, that you will spare Maguire's life,' cried he.

'Why so?' asked Kavanagh testily. 'He is your own enemy.'

'I know it, sir; and for that very reason would not have his blood upon my hands.'

'Blood upon my hands!' repeated Kavanagh fiercely, and looking at his own fingers. 'What is that to you? Have you not just heard that he has committed high treason? You call yourself my loyal subject, and yet you would have me pardon him. *You ask his* life—well, take it, then. The man

free; and now I have not a friend, not one, not one—but you, Dick.'

Murphy had run to his master, and was now helping him to descend from his chair of state with affectionate solicitude. 'Blood on my hands, Dick! Did you hear him? I will never forgive him that. Send them away, send them away!'

As Maguire and Robert went down the stairs together from the hall of audience, the former grasped the latter's arm.

'You turned the tables on me well,' he whispered in harsh and grating tones. 'Where you erred was in not pushing your advantage.' And he pointed to the noose that still swung menacingly above their heads. The next moment he was lost in the throng that crowded about Chesney noisily congratulating him on his acquittal, and overwhelming him with questions; but his words rang long in Robert's ears. It had been indeed imprudent in him to offend Kavanagh, as he had manifestly done, by pleading for this man's life, who, without provocation, would have taken his own; and now, as impervious to gratitude as to mercy, it was plain he would never rest till he had destroyed him. With Murphy, Maguire had still great influence, so long as it was not used against his master; and there was nothing, Robert felt, but Kavanagh's waning favour to preserve him from the fate that he had for the nonce escaped but by a hair-breadth.

These forebodings were in some measure corroborated by finding himself on the succeeding day denied to [redacted] whom he had [redacted]

confer respecting the house-building at New Town, which was proceeding with more despatch than care—and also by the establishment of a sentry on the hill-top, who had orders to prevent any person ascending the same. This latter arrangement, as Robert only too well understood, being to give Kavanagh early and exclusive news of a ship's approach.

On the other hand, Chesney was not personally interfered with; his authority, both at New Town and elsewhere, seemed to be acknowledged as usual, and indeed he was thought to be in especially high favour with the Governor, since he was allowed to use the little boat. In this he paddled about for hours daily, not for pleasure, but in order to make it an accustomed sight, so that, should the opportunity arise of going out to meet the sloop, his doing so should not excite comment. No opposition was even offered when he tried the experiment of beaching the gig at New Town, instead of leaving it in the harbour, though he had reason to suspect that a messenger had been despatched from the latter place to learn whether he had returned to the island. To Maguire, and probably to Murphy, the news that he had not done so would have been welcome, for it was not likely, if once carried out to sea in such a tiny craft, he would ever have seen land again. There was much to do in the way of superintendence of affairs, for little as he knew about agricultural matters, he knew more than his brother-colonists; while in the matter of architecture, since it was almost wholly confined to carpentering, his advice and help were always in request. It was fortunate that it *was so, for if* he had had less to occupy him, he would *have been* consumed with anxieties and apprehensions

upon Lizzy's account, the time for whose arrival, as he calculated, was now drawing very near. He had no doubt that the Alstons would at once embrace the opportunity that had been offered them, and leave England by the next mail; and bitterly indeed he now regretted the haste he had urged them to use. His hope was that they had found themselves unable to so immediately obey his summons, and that before another two months had passed help might arrive from some unlooked-for quarter. If not, and especially if anything should happen to Kavanagh, who was understood to be in very ill health—or at least that was the reason given for the denial he always met with at Government House—he might expect the worst indeed. In the mean time he seemed to be growing more and more out of favour with the Governor, who had sent him orders, through Murphy, that he was to confine himself to his own district of New Town, and not presume to come over to the harbour without permission; an edict which, as he guessed, had a similar intention with that of the appointment of the hill-sentry; other persons had made the same calculations as himself respecting the probable arrival of the sloop.

One morning early, there came a timid knock at his door, and rising in haste, though nearly dressed —for he held himself, day and night, in readiness to take to the boat at a moment's notice—he found Mary Beamish. This girl was very grateful to him for having delivered her from the persecutions of Maguire, who, since the day that had so nearly proved fatal to him, had not [illegible] her, and was [illegible]

(in spite of a little tenderness she felt for Robert herself) she warmly sympathized.

'What is it, Mary?' inquired he eagerly.

'Come to our cottage, sir, and I'll tell you,' said she cautiously. 'I cannot tell you in the street.'

'But is the sloop come? For Heaven's sake tell me *that*.'

'Yes, it arrived not an hour ago; and has sailed away again. I could not get to tell you sooner.'

'But Lizzy? Is she at the harbour?'

'No, indeed, sir; you must not go to the harbour. Mr Maguire, bad cess to him! would only be too glad to see you disobeying orders.—Well, stop one moment;' and as Robert was about to start madly off at the top of his speed, she lifted the latch of the cottage door, and added with a sly smile, 'She's *here*, sir.' The next instant he was clasped in Lizzy's arms.

CHAPTER XIX.

THE EMBARKATION.

'*I'*M here!' observed a dogged voice presently; not as a warning that there was a spectator of the fond pair's rapture (which indeed they already had in Mary), but as a hint that he had been overlooked.

'Oh, Jim, of course,' said Robert, a little awkwardly, *but shaking* him all the more warmly by the hand, *make up* for the neglect.

Jim was not improved in appearance since the old forest days. He had that slouching, defiant look which is acquired from habitual conflict with the law, and he looked dissatisfied besides. 'This ain't much of a place,' said he, 'to come to, across the world, considering how you've cracked it up. There is not a tree as I can see, and where the game's to come from'—

'O Jim! how *can* you,' broke in Lizzy tearfully, 'after what your mother said!' She was not easily moved to tears, as Robert knew, but he had perceived that she was in deep mourning, and guessed the cause, which had prevented him from asking after her mother.

'O yes,' continued Jim, 'it's all very fine for you, who have your young man here, which is all you want. But what *I* want to know is, Why we're here? Why didn't we stay in Melbourne? where we should have been right enough, and Robert have joined us there, instead of'—

'I could not join you there,' interposed Robert gravely. 'I wish I could have done so. It is a long sad story. This place is all you think of it, James, and much, much worse'—

'Hush, hush!' interposed Mary warningly, and pointing to the door of the other room that made up the cottage, and in which the rest of the Beamish family were asleep. 'Tell him all that another time —not here: it is not safe. Take them both over to your house to breakfast.'

'You have sense in your head, young woman,' observed Jim approvingly.

'And kindness in her heart, I am sure,' added Lizzy gratefully. 'She has been so kind to me, Robert!'

that

only fortunate that I happened to have been asked to stay with some friends at the harbour for a few days, and so chanced to be there last night when you arrived. I knew that my mother's roof, such as it is, would give you welcome, and I also knew that Mr Chesney here would have gone mad, if you did not come to New Town. Both Maguire and Murphy, sir' (turning to Robert), 'looked very black at me, but, thanks to you, I have my own way with everybody now.'

And so it was. The Governor in no way molested her, but his craze of imagining her to be his consort made her much 'looked up to' by the colony in general; while after the lesson that Maguire had received, he scrupulously avoided her presence, though without doubt awaiting his own day of recompense.

A few hours put Robert in possession of all that had happened to Lizzy since he sailed to seek what he now felt to be indeed an ill-starred fortune. Her mother had succumbed to the illness of which she had written to him while at Liverpool, and that loss to the orphaned girl had been more deplorable, since it rendered her more subject to the hateful solicitations of John Rowland. Her brother indeed remained to her, but it was easy to see, though Lizzy strove to disguise it, that he had not played the part of guardian as he should have done. Perhaps he was too much in Rowland's power to do so; perhaps he was not unwilling to become allied by marriage with one who could not only screen his offences, but offer him great opportunities for indulging in his favourite pursuit. At all events, it was plain that poor Lizzy had been greatly *persecuted.* Love alone could scarcely have accounted *for the rapture* which she now evinced in having [illegible]

a home, which, humble though it was, was subject to no intrusion, or for the happy confidence she showed in Robert's protecting arm. He had not the heart to fully disclose to her how weak that arm really was; and indeed it would have been hard to convince his hearers, fresh from the well-ordered glades of Windsor, of the abnormal and anarchic condition of things on *Murphy's Island*, and of the perils from a mad despot in the one case, from a revengeful traitor in the other, in which they stood. What he told them did but make Jim more than ever curse his fate in having quitted, first England, and then Melbourne, for 'this cussed island;' a very natural, but at the same time an ungenerous expression of feeling, whereat Robert winced; while, on the other hand, it made Lizzy nestle in his arms the closer, whose dear embrace filled him with trembling fears. When he bethought him how, that for his sake, and at his invitation, she had come to such a perilous spot, her very beauty sent a chill to his heart. She was more beautiful even than when he had seen her last, and as he had so often pictured her, while absent. She was no longer the tall and slender girl that had hung upon his neck in passionate farewell, but six months ago, but a graceful woman. Her simple mourning dress became her admirably; the one black ribbon that confined her plentiful soft brown hair was, in his eyes at least, more attractive than a circlet of pearls; the small white collar about her shapely throat embellished it better than a diamond necklace, save that the latter would have less concealed its charms. *Her* pearls and diamonds were in her eyes, from which [redacted] would gather

long stinted lips. And yet one of that re-united pair, at least, was well aware that it was no time for courtship and love-passages; and how to escape from *Murphy's Island* was the one thought that occupied him whenever he dared to think. Notwithstanding that when she was out of his sight, he always trembled for Lizzy's safety, he did not omit once a day to put to sea as usual in his little boat, and coast round to the opposite side of the island, where alone he could hope to catch sight of some passing sail. He would have taken Lizzy with him, had he dared, but fraught with danger as his position was in any case, to have infringed Kavanagh's edict would, he felt, be at once to draw down on him—or, what was worse, on her—the pent-up vengeance of Maguire. That Kavanagh, if not won over by the latter, was at all events growing more and more unfavourable towards himself, was only too plain; not only was he still forbidden to approach the harbour, but the permission he had applied for, to give up his own residence to Lizzy and her brother, had been coldly—perhaps cynically—denied to him, as being derogatory to Robert's position as Lieutenant-governor. Under pretence of being his servant, however, Jim was allowed to have a lodging under his roof, a privilege only granted perhaps because it was known that it would not add to his own domestic comfort. James Alston indeed had shown himself little less than an enemy of Robert's. He spoke ill of him, or, at all events, in dissatisfied and grumbling terms, throughout the island; and was in consequence received into open favour with Murphy, and, as was *whispered*, by Maguire himself. Another, though less *particular* reason for his being 'taken up with' by the

former at least, was his love for drink, which, always manifest in him, had become on the island, where strong liquor was only too easily procurable, very pronounced indeed. He would come home from the harbour drunk, to the Lieutenant-governor's residence, and behave not only with disrespect, but in the most offensive manner, to Lizzy's inexpressible concern: at last, coming home one evening more intoxicated than usual, when his sister and Robert chanced to be taking a walk together, and finding the boat as usual drawn up upon the beach, he launched it, and paddled out to sea. Robert saw him from the shore, and hurried home, not daring to communicate to Lizzy the apprehensions that audacious act inspired within him; but the mischief had been done. Even if the fact of this contravention of the law could have been concealed through the good nature of those who witnessed it—which was more than doubtful, since Jim had rendered himself far from popular in New Town — the culprit would have thrown away that chance, for he boasted openly of the deed, affirming in one breath that he was an Englishman, who owed no obedience to Kavanagh nor any other 'Irish body,' and in the next, that Murphy and Maguire were hand-in-glove with him, and would see he did not come to harm.

The next morning, he was seized under Chesney's roof, and carried off to the harbour, where the latter dared not follow him: the arrest itself might have been made, and very likely was so, with the very intention of thus getting the Lieutenant-governor into the net of despotic law; and though he would have run the risk had he himself only stood in peril, he dared

[redacted]dent on

he did not anticipate any very severe sentence upon Alston from the fact of his connection with Murphy. Lizzy, however, was beyond measure alarmed and solicitous upon her brother's account, and at once hastened over with Mary Beamish to Government House. With Kavanagh she was sternly denied an interview; but Maguire coolly informed her that if her brother's life was spared it would be so, as Robert's had been, on the condition that he should make a disclosure of certain state secrets, and in the mean time, he was to remain in prison. To Lizzy this was inexplicable, but Robert understood but too well what it meant: James Alston was to be kept in confinement, with the fear of death hanging over him, until he should confess to some treasonable words spoken by the Lieutenant-governor; and indeed, when in company with his sister, he had heard Robert speak frankly enough, and needed no imagination to invent them. Whether he should have the baseness to betray them, was at present doubtful; but the one thing certain, whether as regarded the prisoner's fate or his own, was, that not a moment was to be lost in leaving the island. The state of affairs had become intolerable, and must be put an end to at all risks. Robert could now handle the boat with ease, whether with sail or oar; and small as she was, had acquired great confidence in her. So long as the sea was tolerably smooth—and it was now fair weather—he felt that she would float well enough; though anything like a gale would without doubt sink her. He knew his course to Melbourne, and made up his mind to tempt the dangers of the deep, though it was but in a cockle-shell, rather than trust any longer to the caprice of a madman or the mercy of a vill[illegible]

He had small hope indeed of reaching the mainland in such a craft; but it was not impossible, could he keep her above water, that he might fall in with some passing vessel: in that case, no matter what she was, nor whither she was bound, help for Lizzy would surely be obtained, for had he not about him the money wherewith to purchase it! At any moment he might be himself arrested, or the permission to enter the boat withdrawn from him, and even this last desperate plan be thereby entirely frustrated; so he set about his arrangements at once. His glass, his compass, and his map he disinterred from their hiding-place, and concealed them in the gig; he also stored an abundance of water and provisions ready to place on board of it at the last moment. But he could not go—he had not the heart to do so—without acquainting Lizzy with his intention.

'It is a wild and desperate hazard, darling,' said he, having set before her both the perils that he was about to flee from, and those which he must needs incur; 'but it is the last chance left to me, and I must take it.'

'Take it,' cried she, 'and may Heaven prosper it; but if you love me, Robert, grant me one thing: take *me* with you!'

At this proposition Chesney was greatly alarmed and distressed. He had expected arguments against his own departure, but this sympathetic compliance with it embarrassed him far more than opposition could have done. The idea was hopeless, preposterous. To dare the ocean in so frail a bark himself, he knew to be perilous in excess; but to [illegible] delicate [illegible] that peril [illegible]

of. And yet she pleaded hard, and not without some show of argument and good sense.

'I could say, Robert, that without you, and knowing the dangers to which you were exposed, life would be here intolerable to me; I could say that, left without your protection, I would rather die than trust myself to the tender mercies of such men as Maguire and Murphy, who would at once guess that you had taken flight, and take vengeance upon poor me, who would alone be within their power; but you have thought of these things yourself, I know, though you have been silent on them for my sake. Let me remind you rather of what you have forgotten: how useful my poor help may be to you. I know nothing of the sea, it is true, but on the river, remember, I have learned to manage both sail and tiller; the little boat will trim no worse, but the better for my weight, and even for the greater quantity of provisions that my presence may make necessary. If you perish, let me perish with you, which would be more merciful to me than to bid me live on; and if, through Heaven's mercy, we escape, let us escape together.'

Such were, in brief, her arguments, which, backed by tears and kisses, in the end prevailed on her lover to carry her with him. As Robert had access to the provision store, the preliminary arrangements were soon completed, and the very next evening was fixed upon for the adventure. It was necessary to delay till after dusk, in order that they should elude the pinnace, which, without doubt, would instantly be sent after them. But with eight hours or so of clear start, Robert hoped that he would elude pursuit; once out of sight of the island, he would be safe: not even

Maguire was capable of shaping his course to Melbourne without the aid of a compass, and fortunately enough, there was none such on the island save that which Robert possessed. The date of the fugitive's escape was delayed by a curious circumstance. Robert, who had purposely avoided Lizzy's company for some hours, in order to avoid suspicion, was alone in his house, making a few final preparations, when suddenly a violent report shook the frail tenement, so that the glass fell from the windows, and everything on the shelves was thrown to the ground. The whole population of the village were in the street in an instant, to seek the explanation of the phenomenon, which they deemed as before to proceed from the explosion of some gigantic piece of ordnance; for the sky was without a cloud, and no indication of thunder was to be felt in the atmosphere, which was serene and cool. Lizzy herself, accompanied by Mary Beamish, ran across to Robert's house, and, with joyful cries, averred that some ship of war was nearing the harbour. He met them at the door, with an excited but unjoyful face.

'The sentry is still on the hill-top,' said he, 'which shows that he has seen no ship. My belief is that it is'—before he could say 'an earthquake,' another shock took place, even more violent than before, and accompanied by a strange appearance in the sea; the waves were rising and roaring upon the shore like water that is about to boil.

'The boat, the boat!' cried he, and rushed down to the spot where it was beached, a little remote from the village, followed by the two young women. With their assistance he was able to drag it up far higher on the shore; but they were only just in time. The

waves gathering strength and volume every moment, swept over the very place where it had lain in a few minutes, and one even, the sixth and largest, caught themselves as they fled up-hill before it; they escaped, however, with a thorough wetting, and the boat, being laden, was too heavy to be dragged down by its recoil. After the sixth wave, the sea went back again to its usual limits, but continued greatly disturbed. The houses in New Town were all more or less damaged, and one or two swept away: though there were no lives lost, the people were in a state of great perplexity and alarm, which Robert in vain attempted to allay by assuring them that the earthquake was over. He could convince none except Lizzy and Mary, who had been greatly impressed by his sagacity in respect to the danger that menaced the boat; although he was solely indebted for his knowledge to a narrative he had somewhere read of the great earthquake at Lisbon, where the waves had risen and swallowed up the land. Now was the time, when men's minds were occupied with vague terrors, and disinclined to concern themselves with the affairs of others, for the fugitives to put their plan into execution: at nightfall, accordingly, by which hour the sea had resumed its former calm, Robert and Lizzy stole out to where they had left the boat, and proceeded to push it down the hill. As they were thus employed, a hand was laid upon Robert's arm, and his blood ran cold within him. To be served with a writ of *ne exeat regno* at such a momentous crisis would have gone nigh to kill him, and he expected no less than to see Maguire or Murphy, with help to back *them,* come to forbid his departure. To his immense

relief, however, his eyes only met Mary's pretty face, with a sad sweet smile upon it.

'So you are going away—you two—without even a good-bye to me,' sighed she.

'We are, dear Mary,' answered Lizzy: 'we did not tell you of our intention, only in order that you might be in ignorance when taxed with the knowledge of it by others. Besides, in a few weeks at farthest, with Heaven's aid, we hope to be back again with help for my poor brother and for all of you.'

'I knew Mr Chesney was going,' said Mary softly. 'I felt that the boat was heavier than it should be, when I helped to beach it to-day. "There are provisions in it," said I to myself, "under that tarpauling;" nor would he, I felt, have shown such anxiety about the safety of the gig, had he meant it to serve only as a fishing-boat. Yes; I knew *he* was going, and even guessed that it would be to-night; but I never dreamed of your accompanying him, Lizzy.'

'Will you come also?' said Lizzy tenderly. 'There is room, and there is food.'

'No, dear, no,' answered Mary. 'The temptation is great, but the people here will have no friend but me when Mr Chesney has gone, and I am of use to them in many ways; above all, I cannot leave my mother.'

'In a fortnight's time, be sure we shall meet again, Mary,' said Robert consolingly. 'Not one instant shall be lost by me in procuring assistance for you all—for you *above* all, Mary,' and he kissed her cheek, 'to whom we both owe so much.'

'You will do your best, as you always do for others,'

answered she gravely; 'but something tells me that the help will come too late—that we are parting for ever. That is why I could not help coming here to say good-bye.'

After a few more words of consolation from Robert, which the girl acknowledged in silence, with the same sad smile, and after the two young women had affectionately embraced, the boat was launched, Mary running into the waves, and pushing it off with her own hands. Robert watched her standing on the shore until her form faded away into the dusk; every stroke of his oars sounding in his ears like a muffled funeral bell. I think that Lizzy also knew that Mary loved him, and pitied her, not with the contemptuous pity that some who have won the wealth for which they toiled have for the poor, and that some women have for their unsuccessful rivals, but with true and genuine tenderness.

'Since it cannot now be seen from the island,' said Robert, breaking the long silence, 'we can put up the sail;' and he did so.

CHAPTER XX.

GONE UNDER.

THEY sailed all night, the sea being tolerably tranquil, in what Robert judged to be the right direction; but the clouds gathered heavily, and hid the stars, so that he could make use neither of them nor of the compass. Lizzy was very helpful to him in the management of the boat, and he allowed her to do more than was necessary, in order to distract her thoughts. As for sleep, anxiety forbade her even to close her eyes. At sunrise, which in these latitudes occurs at once, without the streaks of dawn that herald it at home, they looked anxiously about them, and beheld the island still lying at a great distance. The wind had unfortunately changed in the night, and their course with it. They lowered their sail at once, in hopes to have escaped observation, and Robert took to the oars, and pulled his best. But either the sail had already attracted the notice of those on land, or the gig itself was discernible by means of the telescope. Before half-an-hour had elapsed, their worst apprehensions were confirmed by seeing the pinnace leave the harbour, and, with a favourable breeze, bear directly down upon them. Robert once more put up the little sail, and rowed as before with all his might, while Lizzy steered; but it was *evident that his* exertions

'We are lost,' he murmured, 'and I have been her destruction.' He felt sure that Kavanagh, urged by Maguire, would condemn Lizzy to death for disobeying his edict, probably without permitting him to speak in her defence: nay, if permitted, what would his words avail!

Lizzy awaited her fate in silence, keeping her loving eyes fixed on her companion's face; there were no tears in them now: English born and English bred, she was not one easily to give up hope, nor, indeed, was she so deeply impressed as Robert was with Kavanagh's despotic power. 'He would surely never put her brother to death, though he might frighten him, far less herself, or Robert.'

She was soon fated to be undeceived. The pinnace came up to them very rapidly, and on her deck they could perceive Murphy himself, with three of the most devoted of his adherents. The former levelled a revolver at Robert's head as she came alongside, and bade him and 'the deserter' come on board. There was nothing for it but to obey. The unhappy fugitives were transferred to the pinnace, which immediately put about for the island—clumsily enough, for Murphy knew little of seamanship, and his men less—with the gig fastened by a rope in tow. Robert was bound hand and foot, and thrown into the bows. Only one sentence more was vouchsafed by Murphy. 'It is lucky for you, traitor,' said he to his prisoner, 'that Maguire was not in my place. He would have shot you down like a dog. There is now, however, twelve hours of life before you, since you will die at sunset. *As for this* girl, she will not be hung, since I have

taken a fancy to her myself; and he looked towards Lizzy with sullen approval.

'Fool, idiot, that I was!' thought Robert, his helpless frame trembling with fury. He had had a pistol in his pocket, and might have settled accounts at least with this miscreant at the moment when he was overtaken, but he had forborne to do it, upon Lizzy's account, and lest the other men, who were also armed, might in revenge have killed her on the spot. Now, for her sake, he regretted that he had not done so. The poor girl was sitting in the stern, with her eyes fixed on the sea, and her face pale as death—the death which Robert knew that she was meditating. After Murphy's words she had made up her mind not to be carried ashore alive. Presently, the sea became extraordinarily agitated, and the vessel, guided as it was by such unskilful hands, began to be unmanageable.

'If you will loose my limbs,' said Robert, 'I will save the ship: otherwise, you will all four go to the bottom sooner than you expected.'

The three men looked at Murphy, as much as to say, 'There is something in that.'

'The Governor's orders were, that he was to be bound hand and foot,' mused Murphy; 'but then, on the other hand, he was to be brought back; and if we sink, that can't be done.' On the whole, he thought his master's orders—and he thought of nothing else—justified him in cutting Robert's bonds, and handing him the tiller—not, however, without this caution: 'If you do not steer direct for the island, I will blow your brains out.'

'I must steer as the sea will let me,' answered

Robert coolly. A grim calmness had settled down upon him; the thought that he could kill Murphy at any moment was a very considerable comfort: and whenever he looked towards Lizzy, he longed to do so. The sea still continued very rough, notwithstanding that there was scarcely any wind, and a cloudless sky. A wave would sometimes sweep the deck from end to end, and the blinding spray dashed over the bows like a fountain.

'You are not steering for the harbour!' roared Murphy presently, and fingering the butt of his revolver.

'The spray flies so high and thick that I cannot even see the island,' was Robert's quiet reply. Where is it?'

Ay, where *was* it? It had been seen a minute ago about half a league to the south-west, and now it was not visible.

Murphy and his men looked out for it with eager eyes; Lizzy lifted up her head, and languidly looked about her, though the question had little interest for her, since she never meant to set foot upon the shore. Robert, who knew the very place where it ought to be, could see nothing, though his gaze was prolonged and fixed. This was the more extraordinary, for at this time the waves began sensibly to abate and the spray with it. The sea, and nothing else, was to be beheld on all sides. Incredible as the fact seemed, there could be no doubt about it: *The island was gone.*

They sailed on in the direct course in which it ought to lie; but as though it had been a floating island, with *power of* rapid locomotion, it eluded them.

'*There* is some witchcraft in this,' exclaimed

Murphy, turning furiously towards Lizzy. 'It is you who have done it, you fair-faced devil.'

Robert took out his pistol, cocked it, and placed it on the seat behind him. One of the crew, however, stepped between the girl and Murphy.

'That is nonsense, Dick,' said he. 'There has been murder enough done already, and who knows but on that very account this thing has happened. Remember Pat Doolan!'

'But the young masther!' ejaculated Murphy with a groan of agony. 'What *can* have become of him? O sir'—here he burst into tears, and turned to Robert with outstretched hands and suppliant voice—'I have done you wrong, and meant you worse, but you loved the young masther once yourself—I know it, for that was why I hated you—I pray you, then, for his sake, tell me what has happened! You know so much, while I—I only know that I have lost him!'

With that he grovelled on the deck, and would have clasped Robert's knees, had he permitted it. 'Are you sure, are you quite sure that this is where the island was?'

'I am quite sure of that,' answered Robert gravely; 'and what has become of it, I think I can also tell you. I have no more experience of such matters than yourself, but I have read that islands are sometimes cast up in the sea, and there remain for many months and years, and then again are swallowed up with shocks as of an earthquake as quickly as they came; and such, as I believe, has been the fate of this one; at all events, it is beyond a doubt that underneath us now is the grave of all your friends, and some of mine.'

Lizzy, notwithstanding the miracle, as it seemed,

that had been wrought for her deliverance, was weeping bitterly for the fate of her ill-starred brother. Robert, too, hung his head, thinking of the self-sacrificing hands that had pushed his boat off but a few hours ago from what then was land, and were now tossing unlife-like beneath the wave with shingle and with shell. The men, too, were deeply affected, and gazed down into the blue depths, as though it were possible to descry within them the forms of their lost friends — wives, children, comrades. Perhaps, poor fellows, they were simple enough to suppose that the island might presently reappear again, with nobody much the worse. Murphy still knelt in the boat, with his clasped hands before his face—a piteous spectacle. After a pause, passed in unutterable thoughts, Robert again broke silence: 'There is no use in our remaining here, Murphy,' said he firmly; 'I shall steer for Melbourne.'

'You will do as you please, sir,' answered the other in broken tones, 'and these men will obey you. The masther said that if anything happened to him, you were to be his successor.'

These words were spoken with a certain reverential humility, as though Chesney had actually become invested with a portion of that authority which, with Murphy, stood in the place of all others—human or Divine. All at once he sprang to his feet, and stood in the attitude of one who listens attentively.

'What do you hear?' asked Robert anxiously. It was just possible that another volcanic shock, such as had doubtless submerged the island, had given warning *of its approach*, though to his own ear nothing was

apparent but the soft splash of the wave and the flutter of the sail, for the boat was almost stationary.

'I hear his voice,' cried Murphy. '"Dick, Dick!" he says, soft and low, just as he used to whisper when I was down with the fever, and he was minding me. I'm coming, I'm coming, masther!'

And before any one could interfere, the faithful foolish fellow had placed his foot upon the gunwale, and with tight folded arms had leaped into the sea. He was a strong and active swimmer, as all well knew, but he never rose again. Robert would have given much to see him do so, for in that act of fidelity—dog-like or madman-like though it might be, but inexpressibly touching—all the wrongs done or intended to him or his were forgotten; but they watched for him in vain: Murphy had gone to join his master. After half-an-hour of fruitless waiting, the pinnace was put about, and sailed for Melbourne. They would have had to endure much privation on the way, even had they reached it at all, since the store of provisions in the gig was very insufficient for five persons; but on the second day they fell in with a vessel bound for England, which took them all on board. The terrible and unlooked-for destruction that had overwhelmed their friends—though at the same time it had preserved themselves—for some time overshadowed the lovers. For Mary, they both mourned; Lizzy bewailed her brother, for whose fate Robert could not be expected to feel poignant grief; while on the other hand Kavanagh's loss appeared far otherwise to him than to Lizzy, or than it had done to himself at the moment of their own deliverance. The acts of violence com-

mitted by the 'young masther' from first to last, and inclusive of his brother's murder, he honestly ascribed to madness, to which indeed they were doubtless due: how far that madness had been induced by passion and want of moral control, and finally by drink, was a question into which he dared not look. What he strove to remember now was only the drowned man's tenderness and trust. Lewis had perished without leaving any heirs, so that the bequest of the three thousand pounds—with the deduction of that large proportion of it which he did not forget to bestow on the three survivors from Murphy's Island, in accordance with Kavanagh's wishes—might fairly be considered to be his own. The first sum which he expended out of it on arriving in England went to the purchase of a marriage ring; and during the time which the cruelty of the law interposed between him and wedded bliss, he placed his Lizzy under the care of Mistress Mulvaney. To the former's surprise, and indeed not a little to her scandal, the widow welcomed him with a hearty embrace. 'I never thought to see you again, my brave boy,' cried she, 'nor to hear anything of you, save that you had come to grief; far less such good news as this;' and here she kissed Lizzy. 'You went away from my house, lad, in very indifferent company: as to one of them, I ask no question, for ever since what happened at Falston Hall I washed my hands of him. But how is that ne'er-do-well, Dick?'

Robert's face told her before he could reply in words. The widow plumped down on the little sofa—*it was in* the old smoke-room that the interview took *place*—and burst into tears.

'Heaven forgive me for speaking ill of the dead!' cried she; 'and he such a broth of a boy! But tell me all about it.'

Robert did not tell her all, or perhaps she would once more have altered her opinions; but he told her what he could of good about him; and especially concerning his end.

'I never thought Dick would overlive his master,' was the widow's quiet comment when she had recovered herself. 'Do you remember what you wrote about him to your pretty sweetheart here, comparing his fidelity to that of a dog? He got hold of that letter, and made me read it to him in this very room; and when I got to that part of it, the poor fellow only said, "Well, that's true enough;" as though he was proud of it.'

With his remaining two thousand pounds or so, Robert purchased a little business in the cabinet-making line, for which he had always had a taste; and being not only diligent himself, but having a diligent wife — which always doubles a poor man's gains—he soon became prosperous enough. The first article of any elaboration that he turned out with his own hands was a tea-caddy, which now forms the admiration of the patrons of Mulvaney's. The outside has succumbed to the all-pervading influence of the place, but the inside—and this Mrs Mulvaney persists in ascribing to its excellent workmanship, rather than to its contents—has up to this time successfully resisted the flavour of onions. Robert has one son, named after himself. He would have called him 'Frank,' after his benefactor, but Lizzy opposed it. 'Mr Kavanagh was very *good to us,*' pleaded she, 'I own; but I do not

wish my boy to remind me in any way, even in name, of a mur——I mean, of Murphy's Master.' In graceful return for this compliance, when a little girl arrived to make their home complete in its domestic furniture, her mother named her Mary. As for the other Mary —Mary Becher—so strangely and unwittingly mingled with their fortunes, nothing could be heard of her, though Robert did his best to find her out. He felt that the least they could do was to share with her, should she need it, the abundance with which they had been dowered by him she had known and loved as Wilson. It is probable, however, that he had amply provided for her before he quitted England.

The Chesneys lead a happy quiet life, and they desire no other. The love of adventure with which Robert was once possessed has been fully satisfied, and he is very reticent concerning his past experience. As a customer of his of some standing, and admitted in some sort to his familiarity, as being an amateur cabinet-maker who has a turning-lathe of his own, I gained possession of the foregoing facts; but I should not have done so, had I not, in addition to those pretensions, happened to disclose the circumstance that I had been witness to a certain scene at a turnpike gate near Windsor Forest, on one stormy winter night, which was, as it turned out, the prologue to his own eventful history. I, too, although but for a few moments, had seen both Murphy and Murphy's master, and therefore seemed entitled to be told their story.

To assert its truth would seem to be to protest too *much;* but as a satisfaction to that considerable class

of the community who 'only believe what they read in the newspapers,' I may add that its most singular feature — the sinking of a populated island — was recorded in the columns of the *Times* within the last three years.

'END OF MURPHY'S MASTER.

IN THE HEART OF A HILL.

CHAPTER I.

THERE is in Yorkshire, as most English people are aware, a certain district on its north-western frontier which is called Craven, signifying the district of rocks. It borders upon the more famous Lake Country, and though it possesses mountains of its own, is somewhat overshadowed and dwarfed by the higher and bolder hills which are the boast of Westmoreland and Cumberland. As if in despair of competing with these neighbours in elevation or grandeur, the hills of Craven have long attracted 'the British public' by an exhibition entirely peculiar to themselves, namely, by showing—at prices varying from a penny to half a crown—their insides instead of their outsides. While mountains in general plume themselves on their solidity, those of Craven take a morbid pride in advertising the fact that they are hollow—or perhaps we should more justly say that sometimes by a slight convulsion of nature, by which cracks and crannies are disclosed in their armour of rock, and sometimes by an accidental stroke of the pick of the quarryman, it is discovered that they *contain in* their stony bosoms undreamed of dwelling-*places,* caverns, halls, and passages into which has

never penetrated the light of day. I say dwelling-places, because the idea that they are intended for such cannot fail to strike the visitor as, torch in hand, he follows his guide through their subterranean labyrinths. In some of them, it is true, the passages that connect their stately apartments are so low that one has to stoop, or even go upon all fours; but in others you may wander for hours without having once to bow your head. A carpet of whitish sand, very like the sand and sugar which the grocer sells us as 'seconds,' is spread alike in corridor and chamber, and glitters in the torch-light as though the floors were strewn with diamonds; and though no gas is employed, water is laid on in most cases throughout the establishment. A clear and generally shallow stream moves noiselessly along, here broad, here narrow, till it either finds its way into the sunlight, and thereby betrays the secret of the cave's existence, or suddenly leaps down within the cave itself into darkness and chaos.

'We don't know whither it goes, nor how far,' says the guide, throwing the gleam of his torch as far as he can upon the dark profound, and bidding us listen to the rush and fall of the vanishing stream: 'some thinks as it joins the Lune in Carbrook Dale, and others as it never comes out at all.' Compared in extent with such a subterranean wonder as the Mammoth Cave of Kentucky, these Craven caverns are, indeed, insignificant; but they are quite large enough to be lost in—the various passages extending in some cases for miles—while they boast of beauties in stalactite and stalagmite superior to those of their colossal rival. So charmingly beautiful, indeed, are some of these objects, pendent like icicles from the lofty walls, or rising from the floor

thrones or altars, or even in shapes of frosted silver bearing some resemblance to the human form, that the wonder is how such admirable works of nature should so long have been denied to the eye of man. How many centuries—nay, tens of centuries—until some labourer drove his pick through their rocky casket, have these treasures wasted their wealth unseen by mortal! and how many other storehouses, equally rich, lie still inviolate and undreamed of in the hard heart of these hills! Perhaps the earth and its marvels were not, as we vainly think, made for man alone, and the magic splendours of under-ground Craven may have had, and have, their uses for other beings. Perhaps the king of the gnomes holds court there; or the fairies, vanished from their 'dancing rings,' where they can no longer disport themselves in privacy on account of the matutinal activity of the followers of the mushroom trade, foot it noiselessly on these inmost sands; or perhaps the ancient gods, rejected by heaven and earth, have withdrawn themselves into these rock-bound recesses to murmur against the new order of things, and the world that has forsaken them. Perhaps this accounts for the strange noises that are heard in lonely spots upon the hills in Craven, gruntings and grumblings under-foot, which the man of science explains by the roar of subterranean streams, but which may, after all, be the curses not loud but deep of discrowned gods—Jove throwing a thunder-bolt in impotent wrath, or Vulcan striking an impatient blow on a stalagmite by way of anvil. For these sounds, curiously enough, are often intermittent; there is an ebb and flow in these under-*ground* waters, produced, say the learned, by a sort of *natural* siphon. Besides these marvels, there are 'pots,'

deep natural wells, rounded as though by the hand of man, but of solid stone, at the bottom of which are running streams; and even 'boiling pots,' where the dark water rises to the surface and churns over, and then returns to its deep channel to thud and gurgle as before, unseen.

It was, however, none of these natural curiosities which tempted me to Carbrook Dale one spring, but something much better and more attractive—a cordial invitation from an old friend. Frank Lorton had been at college with me ten years ago, and we had met just often enough since in London and elsewhere to keep our friendship green, and allow us to begin our occasional intercourses at the same point as where they last left off; without which opportunities, say what we will, the most constant-hearted of us become new men to each other with the changeful years, and more or less of strangers. Frank had been dependent on a certain wealthy uncle, who used to quarrel with him periodically, and made a new will every six months; but this relative had at last deceased, fortunately during an interval of reconciliation, and left Frank for the first time in his life with a roof of his own—the lord of Lorton Tower. It was a fine mansion in the sense that a plain woman is sometimes called fine, being of stately aspect, round, and of considerable extent; but its architectural features were simple to plainness, and but for the ivy which threw over them its graceful veil, would have been downright ugly. In its youth, however, it must have had attractions, since it had been laid siege to both by Roundhead and Royalist, and bore marks of the delicate attentions of both parties in the shape of shot-marks and cracked masonry.

If Frank was not very well suited to be a feudal lord in all respects—he was no sportsman, and his views were Darwinian and super-scientific—he had the feudal virtue of hospitality, and made his guest thoroughly comfortable. It was early spring, which is an inclement time in Craven, but the heaped-up hearths kept the cold out of the old Tower, and the wassail-bowl was pushed merrily round in the tapering shape of Clicquot. Though a bachelor at present, Frank had been given to understand that, now he had become 'landed,' it would be necessary to choose a wife out of one of the county families in the neighbourhood, but in the mean time he enjoyed his liberty, and was content to discuss the origin of species over a cigar. He was scientific, as I have said, in a wild sort of way, and liked nothing better than to wander over those curious Craven hills, and theorize about their hidden marvels; and I was glad to accompany him in his walks, though I did not go very far with him toward his conclusions. It was not the time of year when the general public is admitted into the recesses of the hills; from June to September only, when the excursion trains are running, the great caverns throughout the district are lit up for the reception of visitors: but Frank had sufficient influence to unlock them for us, and we saw most of what was to be seen in the recesses of Carr and Ingleborough, though in a somewhat imperfect fashion. Carr is a hill, of course—Carbrook being the name of the town at its foot, and Carbrook Dale of the district immediately about it—and a very fine hill, but as bare as a billiard ball in the matter of foliage, and, indeed, of verdure. It towers *over the* village which is called after its name in almost *perpendicular* terraces of limestone, resembling solid

masonry, and it is there that admission to its subterranean wonders is obtained. From Lorton, on the other hand, it rises by a gradual slope, and many a windy walk had Frank and I to its bald brow. Upon one occasion, just as we neared a certain rowan-tree in full flower, the only arboreal ornament in sight, he held up his hand for silence. 'We are five hundred feet from the heart of the hill,' said he, 'and two miles from the nearest open stream, and yet I hear running water.' I listened, and heard it too, though, unless he had told me what it was, I should not have recognized the sound. To my ear it was like the gasps of some strong man in the agonies of suffocation, and I said so.

'The stream is intermittent,' he explained, 'and its voice comes up to us through a vast speaking-trumpet. I have brought this with me'—and he pulled from his pocket an immense ball of twine—'to show you from what a depth it comes to us.' He tied one end of the string to the rowan-tree, and picking up a large dark stone, which happened to have a perforation in it, attached that to the other end. 'Now,' said he, pointing to a crack in the ground so small that it had escaped my notice, 'there can be no deception on my part: heave the lead for yourself.' I put the stone into the crack, and it dropped at once, carrying the line with it, on and on and on, until the whole length was run out.

'Why, the hill is hollow!' cried I.

'A good deal of it is,' returned he. 'It would take us a good three miles to get down to where that stone now lies in the great Banquet Hall, as they call it, under Carr.' I had been with him there last week, and remembered it, of course, quite well. Where we *were standing* then, the hill was in truth quite hollow.

'That was where the iguanodon was found,' said Frank, 'proving that these hills existed, and were the habitations of that class of reptile, before the great diluvial deposit—what the vulgar call the Flood.'

Frank was very ready with his diluvial deposits, his 'upheavals,' and his 'traces of the action of fire,' and in general looked very wise and grave while he was talking about them; but on this particular occasion I caught a twinkle at the corners of his mouth, which emboldened me to remark that I didn't believe a syllable about the finding of that iguanodon.

'And quite right, too,' said he, coolly; 'but it was a capital story, and took in a great many good people who thought themselves sagacious. That the beast was found there, and alive, was true enough; but he had not been there for twenty thousand years, nor for twenty minutes. The fact is, that the geological people came to such positive conclusions about old Carr and his inside, that our doctor in the village, who happened to be a practical joker, grew quite zealous for the honour of his native hill, and resolved to puzzle them a little. Having visited by chance a travelling menagerie at Lancaster, which boasted among its other curiosities of a great lizard, he made overtures for its purchase, and the beast being very ill, and its proprietor in want of funds, he obtained possession of it for a small sum. The chief difficulty he had to encounter was the bringing it to Carbrook without observation, but that he also accomplished by swathing it in flannel, and affecting to treat it as an invalid gentleman come to stay with him in the bracing airs of Craven for his health, and whose *humour it* was to travel by night. Before morning,

and with the connivance of the men who lit up the caverns, he had had the creature conveyed into the hill where the excursionists found him the next day *in situ* —as there were a hundred witnesses to prove. Nothing ever made such a sensation hereabouts since the great diluvial deposit. The local geologists were at daggers drawn over the iguanodon, which the doctor stoutly maintained it was. The rocks of Carr, it was thus proved, he said, were Wealden Bed, which was about equivalent to the declaration that Yorkshire is Sussex, because oysters are found in aviaries. But it took the people in. The mere exhibition of the unexpected saurian at sixpence a head procured two hundred pounds, which this practical joker afterward handed over to the vicar (who believed in the beast, and has not forgiven him for the deception yet) toward the restoration of the old church, while our county dinner-tables were supplied with a topic for conversation for half the summer. He never took me in, and therefore I thoroughly appreciate his stroke of humour, but the ungrateful county (including the local newspapers, who were most indebted to him of all) has looked askance at the good doctor ever since. That benefactor of his species has lost his practice by the affair altogether, except that he got patients out of the excursionists, some of whom were frightened into fits by coming upon the iguanodon in his lair.'

We laughed over this story a good deal, and returned homeward, forgetting all about the twine, which it seemed was of some particular sort used in gardening, as I heard Frank tell his groom to send a boy on the Monday to recover it. The day this hap-

pened was the Saturday before Easter-Sunday—a date which, in connection with that twine, I shall not forget to my dying day.

CHAPTER II.

On the Sunday at breakfast-time the letter-bag brought certain business tidings to my host which necessitated his immediate presence for a few hours in London, and off he started the next morning, with many apologies for thus deserting me. 'You will manage to amuse yourself somehow, I hope,' said he; 'and if you take my advice you will take a stout rod, and Peter will show you where to try your luck in Lune.' The day was calm and windless, though without much sunshine, and though the time was early for fishing, seemed to promise sport; so I took my rod and basket to the river. It being Easter-Monday, and a general holiday, I did not trouble Peter (the keeper) to accompany me—an act of unselfishness which I had afterward bitter cause to rue. No sooner had I commenced operations than the sun came out with intense vigour, and, whether from that circumstance or through my own unskilfulness, I never saw a fin. After about an hour of fruitless endeavour I became weary of throwing a fly into space, and turned my attention to *other* matters. I observed that the country lanes, *beside* which the course of the stream took me, were

thickly thronged with people, and inquired of a cottager whither they were all going. His reply, which was couched in the Craven dialect, was not very intelligible, but I gleaned that there were some great doings in Carbrook which were attracting thither the local world and his wife—principally, as I noticed, in hay-carts without springs, and with shafts tilted higher than I should have liked to see them in any vehicle used for my own riding. But they were hearty, merry folks, full of song and laughter, and in my loneliness I envied them their good companionship, and perhaps regarded them with somewhat wistful looks. At all events, as I sat on a gate taking my rod to pieces preparatory to returning home, I was hailed by a passing farmer with, 'Not much sport, I am afraid, master;' and when I shook my head, he replied, 'Why don't ye gi' it up, then, and come wi' us to the caves? there's plenty of room on the other side of my old woman.'

I don't think he had the least expectation of my accepting his offer, for he laughed while he made it, as did his good dame also; but when I said, 'Well, I'll come if you'll have me,' he pulled up his horse at once (having already passed the gate), and said, 'That's right,' quite cheerily. So up I got into the cart, the increased weight making the shafts fly up, as though in amazement at my audacity, till they were almost as perpendicular as shafts in mines. 'You're a stranger here, I reckon, mister?' said he. And when I told him that I was—without a word of my being a guest at the Tower, lest that fact should have turned his genuine hospitality into a desire to ingratiate himself with a friend of the Lord of Lorton—he became my cicerone at once, pointing out this and

that remarkable object that presented itself, and dwelling upon the towering mass of distant Ingleborough with a Yorkshire dalesman's pride. 'And he's as fine within as without,' said he; 'and so is Carr, for that matter, when he's properly lit up, as he will be to-day.'

Then I learned for the first time that Easter-Monday was one of those days upon which the caverns at Carbrook were illuminated, and more than ever congratulated myself that I had accepted the invitation of my jovial friend. The opportunity, he said, would not occur again till Whit-Monday, after which the excursions began, and the illuminations were pretty frequent. I had only seen the caverns of Carr in company of my friend and a couple of guides, with a corresponding number of torches, and Frank himself had told me how infinitely finer was the spectacle when lights were arranged along the rocky walls from end to end. We arrived at the village just as the holiday train came labouring in with its thousands from Preston, Crewe, and other manufacturing towns—a merry company of all ages and both sexes, but composed for the most part of young men and women.

'If you had rather gang with the lassies, as is only natural,' said the farmer, good-naturedly, 'than bide along wi' us old folks, my missis and I shall not be offended.'

His dame, however, very properly rebuked him for this sentiment, as not only blameworthy in itself, but inapplicable to a young gentleman of my social position; and I, for my part, laughingly asserted that nothing should part old friends. Having left my rod and basket at the inn where our horse was stabled, we three repaired, therefore, to the mouth of the cavern,

which all were directing their steps. It was approached by a picturesque path cut in the side of a ravine, down which a mountain beck leaped and sparkled; and at the end were iron gates, through which the public left the sunlight and passed one by one, after paying sixpence a head to the janitor, into the heart of the hill. There was a great crush, and though I did my best to keep with them, I here lost my kind companions, and was carried in with the stream. The chief difficulties of the subterranean way were to be met with at first. The passage was low-roofed and narrow; one side of it was in the occupation of a shallow stream, and there were slippery rocks to climb, which needed caution, though all was made light enough on the present occasion by innumerable candles —warranted, as a printed notice informed us, to burn for two hours only. The limited time thus placed at our disposal made everybody anxious to push on, and there were scores of cries from as many young ladies that they were 'in want of a hand;' meaning not that they were mutilated, of course, but that they needed the assistance of their respective young gentlemen to help them over the rocks. There were two neatly-dressed and modest-looking girls I noticed who, evidently unused to such rough clambering, were unprovided with a cavalier; and to these, as in duty bound, I proffered my aid. They were frank and communicative, and did not hesitate to let me know, in spite of my politeness, that they would have gladly dispensed with it in favour of the company of a certain 'Jack' and 'Fred,' who had arranged to join them at a station on the railroad, but had been prevented doing so from the extreme fulness of the train. It was so very pro-

voking, they said, and it must seem so strange to *me* to see them without an escort. I begged them to dismiss that latter idea from their minds, and did my best to make up for the absence of their legitimate protectors. Let not the uncharitable misconstrue my actions, and still less theirs. They were 'engaged young persons' to Jack and Fred, as I was given to understand by the remark that those were 'young men as they walked with;' and besides (though, it is true, I must have married rather early in life to have accomplished it), I was old enough to have been their papa. Finally (if there are still carpers), it must be admitted that I could not possibly make love to two young ladies at the same time. But I could not help laughing to myself at the notion of my having the *rôle* of cavalier thus thrust upon me, and looking up nervously now and then when a stout man pushed past me, lest it should happen to be my friend the farmer, who would, without doubt, have rallied me upon the responsibility I had so gallantly undertaken. As for my fair companions, they were full of innocent mirth, and enjoyed with childish delight the extraordinary wonders of the subterranean palace. I explained to them that when mortals were absent it was the abode of the king of the fairies; pointed out his throne in the hall of audience; the very elegant chandelier that sparkled in the queen's boudoir; and the pipes of the princess's organ—a row of stalactites—which, when struck by sticks and umbrellas, as they very often were, emitted such silver sounds. They listened greedily, half crediting what they heard, and only once, when I pointed out to them the picture of the heir-apparent (an arrangement of stalactites somewhat resembling

a picture-*frame*) as a striking likeness of the crown prince of Fairy-land, did they break into open rebellion and disrespect. I told them also of the iguanodon, seventy feet long or so, of which they had read a still more protracted account in the local newspapers, and showed them the exact spot where its head and shoulders had been found in the audience-chamber, while its hind-legs and tail filled up the great gallery. It was like telling stories of Prince Percinet or the Princess All-Fair to an admiring nursery audience, and, for my part, I enjoyed it exceedingly. I suppose the pleasure was mutual, for my fair friends were equally astonished with myself when a cry of 'All out!' was raised, and the people began to turn back toward the entrance. My watch, however, told me that there was still some time to spare, and we had not yet seen that curious spectacle called the Caldron, about which my companions had heard more wondrous tales than anything I had told them. We pushed our way, therefore, through the retreating crowd in the direction in which, from what I remembered of my previous visit to the spot, it lay; and presently, at the end of one of the western passages branching from the Central Hall, we found it. There was not much to see, but what there was suggested weird and uncanny thoughts. The roof sloped down, and the walls narrowed to a sort of arch, through which a stream of considerable depth and volume leaped down into pitch darkness. The roar of the fall was very great, and any substance which was dropped into the water was whirled away at once, no man knew whither, and was never seen again. A venturesome guide had on one occasion attached himself to a rope, and been lowered

down into the abyss below. He was a good swimmer, and had contrived to keep the torch alight that he had carried in his cap; it had been seen for many yards, but was presently extinguished; and when the rope was drawn in by those above, it brought in the too reckless adventurer senseless and almost drowned. His torch had been put out, it seemed, not by the water, but by striking against the roof of the cavern, between which and the stream there was no longer any space. It was no wonder that the simple creed of the villagers held that that sullen flood roared unchecked on to Hades. This view was shared by my companions, but combated by me. I felt it my duty to warn them against all marvellous tales that I did not tell them myself, and explained to them that, in all probability, this river found its way by some undiscovered issue into the river Lune.

'Why, Jack lives on Lune,' said one (her name was Lucy), quite beaming at the very thought of such a coincidence. 'How little he thinks—and, for the matter of that, Ruth, no more does Fred—of where you and I are now standing!'

'Let us send him a line and tell him,' said I, laughing; and I pulled out pencil and paper, and wrote a few absurd words at Lucy's dictation, addressed them to his lodgings, and dropped the billet-doux into the stream. I had found some difficulty in concluding this despatch, by reason of the waning light, but not until it was sent off did it seriously strike me that the lights in the cavern were dying out. On looking round, however, I saw that the candles on the walls had burned *very low*, and that there was no time to be lost in making our exit. Off we started, therefore—my compan-

ions being a little frightened—at a round pace, which would without doubt have brought us to the gates in a few minutes, for they were scarcely more than three hundred yards away as the crow flies. But the crow has no opportunity of flying in the subterranean passages of Carr, which are not straight, but very tortuous; and upon leaving the Central Hall, from inadvertence on my part, and perhaps from some little flurry of mind, we unfortunately took a wrong turn. It was not long, indeed, before we found out our mistake and hurried back, but by the time we had reached the Hall again the candles were all but out—mere sparks upon the walls—while those in the passages, which were by their position more exposed to draughts, were already extinguished. We would have attempted them even now, but the Caldron was not the only abyss that yawned in Carr: half a dozen times on our way in had we been warned by placards, as well as by the voices of the guides, of a peril on the right hand or the left; and how would it be possible to avoid them *now*, in the utter darkness and silence which had succeeded all that glitter and noise? It was that sudden change, I think, that appalled us almost as much as our situation itself. But a few minutes ago we had been the merriest of a merry crowd in a scene of dazzling splendour; and now, alas! we were shut out from every fellow-creature, perhaps for ever, in the dark and silent heart of a hill!

The first impulse of my unhappy companions was to accuse the guides, to whose impatience and inattention to their charges our misfortune seemed to be owing; but I was obliged to confess to myself that we had brought *it upon our own h*[illegible] and again

the cry of 'All out!' had been raised, and the few guides that there were among so many in need of guidance could hardly be expected to give an individual warning to each person. Moreover, it might very well have happened that a guide might have come back to the Central Hall while we were engaged at the Caldron, and, seeing all clear, might have imagined that the excursionists had departed, to the last man. If we had followed the directions that were laid down for the public, we should have visited the Caldron in the first place; but I had taken upon myself the task of guide, upon the strength of my brief previous acquaintance with the place, and varied the programme, as I already began to fear, to our destruction. If Lucy had not wasted our time by causing me to write that silly letter to her lover, all, indeed, might now have been well, but I felt that I had no right to blame a foolish girl for the indulgence of a whim that I might easily have refused to gratify, and reproached myself again and again with the consequences of my vanity and rashness. The poor girls sat sobbing and wailing in the darkness beside me, and though every moan went to my heart, I did not attempt to stop them, but added to their clamour by shouting for help at the top of my voice. There was still a faint hope that the guide who closed the gates might hear our cries, even if he did not return on his own account to satisfy his mind that no one had been left behind. No such good fortune, however, befell our little party; Ruth fancied she heard the far-off clang of the iron gates, and, if so, that was all the sound that now reached us, save the *murmur of* the stream beside us on its way to Lune or *Hades.*

CHAPTER III.

'How long do you think we shall have to remain here, sir?' asked the girl that was called Lucy, presently, in a fretful voice. It was plain that she was thinking of the inconvenience of our situation rather than of its peril; and I hastened to reply as cheerfully as I could, while at the same time sounding her as to what chance of relief might lie in the anxieties of her own friends.

'Perhaps to-night,' said I, 'perhaps not till to-morrow morning. If the gate-keeper gets much ale given to him by the holiday-makers he may sleep late, and we shall be kept prisoners even longer. But I should hope some of your own people would miss you before then, and come to seek us.'

'They won't do that,' returned the girl, sadly. 'Ruth and I live in lodgings alone together, and are quite independent of our friends, except that we dine with them on Sundays.'

'But you will be missed at work—in the manufactory where you tell me you are engaged together, surely?'

'Oh no, sir, or at least not till Wednesday; for Tuesday is kept a holiday, like to-day. And even then there would be no fuss made; we should be only fined for absence, and we all the time starving to death, *perhaps*. Oh dear! oh dear!'

Lucy was rather older than her companion, but much more child-like and demonstrative in her manners, and I thought to myself I must never tell this one the whole truth about our position, or the poor child will take leave of her senses altogether—for the words of the old farmer concerning the times of opening the cave were ringing in my ears like a knell. Not till six weeks hence—upon Whit-Monday—he had said, would there be another illumination, and unless the very unlikely chance of an early tourist coming to Carbrook and hiring a guide or two with torches, on his own account, as Frank and I had done, should occur, long before that time we should have all died a miserable death. The probabilities of our release were, I was compelled to confess to myself, very slender indeed, and depended, it seemed, wholly upon the measures that my host of Lorton Tower might take for my discovery. He was to return by the night mail, and would be at home in the early morning, when for the first time he would hear of my disappearance. I endeavoured to put myself in his place, and consider what *I* should do in such a case if our positions were reversed. I had been last seen on the banks of Lune, and thither his attention would be at once directed. They would probably drag that portion of the river—an operation which must needs consume much precious time. If the farmer who had invited me into his vehicle should hear of the event, all might yet be well; but, for anything I knew to the contrary, his house might be at a great distance, and even bad news travels in the country at no great speed. As to Frank's entertaining the idea that I had visited Carbrook, I felt that *that chance* was hopeless. An Easter-Monday mob

factory hands, he would say to himself, was the last thing likely to attract a man who had come from London for quiet, and whose day had gone by (he was sure to say *that*, confound him!) for the enjoyment of village junketings. No, he would as soon think of finding me locked up in the vaults of Lorton church as in the caves of Carr—which, moreover, as I had already visited them in his own company, might well be supposed to have lost all attraction for me. Nor was there, as it seemed, any hope to be placed in the exertions of the friends of my fellow-prisoners. I understood now for the first time that, among the other disadvantages of poverty, there is this one of being left entirely to ourselves; for if these poor girls had been young ladies, they would have been missed by servants, friends, or relatives within a few hours, and a hue and cry have been raised for them; whereas, until the time came round for their Sunday dinner at home, nobody would ask a word about poor Ruth and Lucy. Upon the whole, the best chance of our discovery seemed to me to lie in the fact that I had left my rod and basket at the inn; for if the landlord had heard of the Lune being dragged for a lost fisherman, he would surely be able to couple the two circumstances together, and arrive at the right conclusion. But I remembered that the inn was very full, and its proprietor exceedingly busy, and that he had put the articles in question hastily away into a cupboard, where they might lie for days, or even weeks, forgotten. A few days in our vast prison-house would probably suffice to kill us all; and frightful as was this reflection, I remember it was accompanied by the grimly humorous idea that the doctor who was a practical joker might make capital

out of our bones, as he had out of the iguanodon—by asserting them to be the relics of Pre-adamite Man.

'Don't cry,' said I to Lucy, cheerfully; for the poor girl was almost in hysterics. 'You should take courage from the conduct of your friend. *You* are not crying, are you, Ruth?'

'No, sir,' was the quiet reply, given in a very low voice; 'but I am frightened at the darkness and the silence, and I— Dear heart! what's that?'

A dull, metallic sound had fallen upon her ear, which, while it evoked a scream from both my companions, filled my own heart with gratitude and gladness. In stooping down (for I was on my legs, though my companions were seated) to catch Ruth's words the pocket of my shooting-jacket had come in contact with the wall, and the concussion thereby reminded me for the first time of my possession of a luncheon box, which the housekeeper of Lorton Tower had hospitably filled with sandwiches that morning before I started for the river.

'Come,' said I, joyfully, 'we shall not die of starvation—at present, at all events;' and I told them what I had found.

'Thank God for that!' said Ruth, simply. 'There is plenty of water, too, is there not, sir? and the air is warm here, and the sand dry. I remember Fred lent me a book, called "Robinson Crusoe," where the man is cast on a desert island, and yet finds cause to be thankful that things were no worse; and he was taken off and came home in the end all safe. So let us submit ourselves to Heaven's will also, and be grateful, and *hope for* the best.'

'You are a good girl,' said I, admiringly, 'and

shall yet make a good wife to Fred, my lass; and Lucy, too,' added I, gaily, 'shall make Jack happy. I wonder whether he has got her letter yet that went by the water post?' My tone, and this reference to her lover, somewhat raised Lucy's drooping spirits. 'Ah, if Jack could only know,' cried she, 'he would dig through the mountain with his hands. I can't think we shall be forgotten and left to perish. Here's a Good-Friday bun, by-the-by, which I saved up to divide with Jack because it has sugar on the top; and either Ruth or I have also a few gingerbread-nuts.'

'Take them all into your keeping, sir,' said Ruth, putting these delicacies into my hands; 'for we don't know how long we may have to stay here, and it may be necessary for us to be allowanced like shipwrecked persons. You are wiser and more prudent than us, who, if we feel hungry, may eat all we have, perhaps, at one meal.'

This trustfulness touched me exceedingly, though, indeed, I suppose hardly any man could have been such a monster as not to have shared every meal to the last crumb with such helpless fellow-prisoners. Our relations with one another seemed to be completely changed. I had amused myself hitherto by playing upon their simple credulity, and treating them as playthings of the hour; I now felt as though they had been orphaned children confided to my charge in solemn trust. Joking and high spirits, of course, were to be expected in them no longer; but I noticed on their parts that they dropped the familiarity that they had originally used in speaking to me, and addressed me as a guardian or protector. Besides my luncheon [redacted] had a brandy flask a little of the contents of

which I persuaded them to take, mixed with water; for I justly deemed that scarce at any time could they more need support than when suffering from the first stroke of such a calamity as had befallen us. The air of the Central Hall, in which we were, was, as Ruth had said, both pure and warm, and its floor was soft and dry; but what distressed us all exceedingly was the pitch darkness. The eye, it is said, soon gets accustomed to the dark; but that is only the case with reference to gloom: where there is no light at all the eye has no service to perform, but roams about in distressing impotence, only to meet blackness that seems a solid wall, and opposes movement. I had, unhappily, no wax-matches with me, but I had some cigar-lights, one of which I struck, and lit by means of it the piece of newspaper which had held the gingerbread; by help of this, rolled up in the shape of a torch, I contrived to secure one or two bits of candle-end from the wall, but they had burned out almost to the last, and could not be carried for an instant. They enabled us, however, to gain some notion of our present position, and to make our arrangements for the future.

We were on the north side of the vast Hall—the one next to Carbrook, and close to the stream, one arm of which led to the Caldron, and the other toward the exit from the caves; without doubt we could have contrived to follow the course of this latter, but it would have been most dangerous so to do, both on account of the abysses of which I have spoken, and of the depth in places of the stream itself; moreover, if even we escaped these perils, this water guide would fail us *long before* we reached the gates, and leave us in a *situation* far less convenient than that in which we

were at present situated. Indeed, if I had wished to move our quarters, I could scarcely have persuaded Lucy, at all events, to put one foot before the other in that dense obscurity which shut us in on all sides.

When we had been many hours in this dreadful place—hours that seemed so long that I could scarcely believe my trusty repeater when it struck them—I proposed that we should divide the crossbun by way of supper (it was no longer hot, but exceedingly stale, and yet it was one of the sweetest morsels I ever tasted), and then try and get some sleep.

I made my own couch on the opposite side of the Hall, though within easy hearing, for the human voice sounded loud and clear in that stately place as I have never heard it elsewhere; but though the murmur of the stream sang lullaby beside me, I could not sleep nor close my eyes.

There is little, as may be imagined, to be narrated of our life in that lightless prison. Every day, which, alas! was also night, found us weaker and more dispirited; and when Wednesday drew to its tedious close we had only one sandwich left and a few drops of brandy. Lucy, worn out with fretting and exhaustion, often fell into a deep sleep; but Ruth, like myself, was feverishly wakeful. When our companion thus forgot her cares we spoke together quite openly of our position. Hope was almost dead within us by this time, and yet this courageous girl spoke as calmly as though she were chatting over her pillow lace—for that, as I had learned, was the occupation of my companions when at home. They had told me everything about themselves and their affairs, and I had been equally confidential to them. What did it matter? In a—

hours we should be transferred from this living tomb to another world, and in the mean while such talk helped to pass the weary hours. Of late, however, probably through weakness, the girls had grown more silent, though in the solemn stillness of night I often heard them recommending themselves to the protection of Heaven, and entreating deliverance for us all.

On one occasion Ruth addressed me, while Lucy slept, in her usual quiet tone, but with something more than its ordinary seriousness.

'There is now but little hope for any of us, sir: of that I am well aware: but there is more hope for you than for us, because you are a man, and stronger. In books that Fred has lent me, about disasters at sea or in travel, it is the women who always give in first, even where the men have stood loyally by them, as you have done by us, and more. God bless you for it! If'—here her poor, weak voice began to tremble—'if I should chance to see Fred no more, and your life should be spared, sir, I beg of you to tell him that I thought of him continually while in this dreadful place, and that my last message to him was not to fret. He deserves a good wife, and I would have striven to have made him one; but there are plenty better than me, and I hope he may find one to make him happy. Of course he'd have taken up with somebody else in time, sir; but I don't wish to make him unhappy about that on my account.'

'For Heaven's sake, don't unman me, Ruth, by talking like this!' said I; and a shudder ran through me as I spoke, at the idea of being left in that living *grave alone*, with my two companions dead beside me.

'I thought you were much too sensible to give way to hopelessness of this sort.'

'I am not hopeless, sir,' said she; 'but what little sense I had I fear is going. It may be merely weakness, but it also may be the beginning of the end, and that is why I have told you about Fred.'

'What makes you think your wits are going, my good girl?' said I, for I had more than once during the last twelve hours felt queer and light-headed myself, and I was anxious to hear whether her symptoms had been similar to my own.

'Well, sir, my head has been bad since yesterday; I seem to hear the noise of a bigger river than what runs through this cave; and sometimes I seem to be at home with father and mother, and sometimes I am walking with Fred; and I begin to see light at all times where there is no light.'

'Where do you see light, Ruth?'

'There, sir, there.' She pointed with her arm, I suppose, but of course I could not see that.

'In what direction, Ruth? Not toward the Caldron, surely?' A faint hope began to dawn on me that there might be some undreamed-of outlet in that direction which the intense darkness had revealed for the first time.

'No, sir; in the opposite direction. I see it now up in the roof yonder like a star in the black sky.'

Then I thought that the poor girl's brain was, indeed, failing, for I could see nothing; but I rose and walked feebly toward where I imagined the spot she indicated to be, and presently, to my wonder and delight, a little speck of white appeared to *my* eyes

also. There was no reason for much joy, except that it *was* light, since it came from the corner of the high roof of the great Hall, hundreds of feet above our heads, and as unattainable to us as that to which Ruth had likened it—a star. It must have been shining there every day during our imprisonment, though her sharp eyes, long accustomed to the gloom, had been the first to discover it; and yet, in my distress and despair, it seemed somehow to be a messenger of hope. That it was a cranny in the mountain roof was clear; though in what portion of the hill it might show itself I had no means of judging. Perhaps some shepherd boy was even now passing by it, little thinking of the poor wretches that were imprisoned beneath him, and taking the fresh air and sunshine as gifts of Nature not worth thanking her for, since they were never denied to anybody. If I had even seen his shadow cross the chink, however, it would have availed us nothing, for he could scarcely have heard our cries for aid; and had he done so, would in all probability have set them down among the weird and unmeaning noises sent forth so often from the recesses of Carr. As I reflected thus my foot struck against a stone. Now to one who has been dwelling on sand a stone is almost as great a rarity as light to one who has been pent up in darkness, and I instantly stooped down to pick it up. Then I uttered a shrill cry, which startled my two companions, and made them cry out also in vague terror. The stone I held in my hand had a string tied round it, and I felt certain that it was the same which I had let down from the hole in the hill on *Saturday*, and that the other end of the string was tied *fast to the* rowan-tree on the top of Carr.

I lit one of my remaining cigar-lights and found this to be the case, for the black stone he had used to plumb with was easily recognizable. And now we had some connection, however frail, with the world without, if we could only use it to some purpose, and *in time*. If we had made this discovery at first, I should have felt that our deliverance was secure; but my companions had grown already very weak, and a few hours more must needs decide their fate; and if *they* died, it seemed impossible to me that I should survive them. There was not a moment, therefore, to be lost. I bade them change their place to one almost immediately beneath the cranny; and then we all took turns to pull gently but firmly at the string, exactly as though we were ringing a bell. The effect of this would be, of course, to shake the rowan-tree, which, all in blossom as it was, and standing quite alone, was a most noticeable object to any person upon the fell. My hope was that the same calm weather might still hold which had prevailed on that fatal Monday that seemed now so long ago, so that the swaying of the tree might not be attributed to natural causes; and even if it should be stormy, there was still a chance of the groom sending the messenger for the twine, as his master had directed him to do in my hearing. As it happened, this latter circumstance did not occur, on account of all hands at the Tower being employed in looking for me in the wrong direction; but I had cause to bless that dilatoriness which so often accompanies the execution of orders given in the country, since, if the boy had brought that twine home *on the Monday*, we three poor prisoners of the Giant Cair would never have [redacted] *from* him alive. [redacted], however,

a shepherd chanced to cross the fell, and was attracted by our signal. Never shall I forget the delirious joy of that moment when we heard him hail us—though we could not catch his words—or the eager cry for help that seemed to well up from our very heart in response. I instantly issued our last ration of sandwiches, and was about to divide the brandy between my two companions, when Ruth whispered that I should give it all to Lucy; and it was fortunate that I did so, for else I scarcely think the poor girl could have survived the suspense that followed. From the accidental absence of the guide who had the charge of the caverns, the key could not be found, and the iron gates had to be forced ere we could be released. It was past midnight before we heard the shouts of our deliverers, and beheld the flashes of their torches cleave the hateful gloom.

The experience of those three days' lodging in the heart of Carr was a profoundly serious one; but it has borne very pleasant fruit. Besides Lorton Tower there are now two other roof-trees near to Lune where I always find a welcome—the cottages of Jack and Fred, who married their respective sweethearts within a few months of their rescue. I was present at the double wedding, and had the duty of godfather in duplicate conferred upon me the ensuing year. Lucy has got the most sensible husband, and Ruth the handsomest; but the latter has got sense enough for both. When romantic people ask me whether I have ever met with a heroine in real life, I tell them 'Yes.' For Ruth had not only the heroism to look Death in the *face, but* the greater courage to contemplate the fact

that her handsome lover would assuredly console himself for her loss by marrying somebody else. 'Lor', and so I should ha' done,' said Fred, with a grin (he is himself not a romantic person), when I revealed to him what Ruth had said: 'a man's heart ain't stone, you know, like the heart of a hill.'

A VERY BAD NIGHT.

I HAVE noticed, in fiction, that when any quite incredible occurrence is about to be narrated, the author prefaces his statement with the remark that what is about to follow is literally true. He pledges his word, as it were, while admitting that the affair has an ugly look, that his readers shall not be deluded. But after all what *is* his word? What is any man's word when weighed in the balance with one's own sense of congruity; and how much less weight has the word of an anonymous author — the mere shadow of a shade! We believe him, or not (just as we do other folk, for that matter), as we feel inclined. Hence it is, therefore, that I abstain from prefixing to the following narration any such heading as 'Strange but True,' or 'Stranger than Fiction,' although it *is* very strange, and although it happened to myself.

Again, before I begin, let me advert to the conventional use of Sleep, in fiction, to account for improbabilities. A gentleman or lady narrate their personal experiences among sphinxes, crocodiles, ghosts, and other unusual company, always insisting upon the genuineness of the impressions they describe, and then come *the anticlimax*; they are engaged in deadly com[illegible]

with a griffin who eats human flesh, when in endeavouring to disengage his beak from some sensitive portion of their persons, 'with the effort' they awake, and 'Lo! 'twas all a dream.' To offer an explanation of this sort for any phenomenon, is, in my opinion, to insult the intelligent reader.

No; the thing I have got to tell happened to me five years ago, but may possibly happen to you to-morrow, and is just as real and authentic an occurrence as the Derby. I had been to the Derby, by the by, on the very day in question; but I was not unduly exhilarated: do not entertain *that* idea for a single moment. I was as sober as any theological student at his examination before his lordship's chaplain; but I had to dine in town, and accompany some country cousins with their children to a juvenile exhibition—a proceeding which, to an old bachelor like myself, is not of an exhilarating nature—and I was dog-tired and utterly knocked up. If you know what it is to be almost too fatigued to undress, and to fall asleep as you flop down on your pillow, you will understand my condition, on the night of May 27th, 1868, which is the date of my Horrible Tale.

At about midnight (for I heard some neighbouring chimes strike), I woke suddenly—as wide awake as ever I was in my life; but it was not in my own snug bed-room. The moonlight, streaming through a vast skylight, disclosed to me a gigantic chamber—or rather a series of chambers—filled with people all as silent and motionless as the dead. They *were* the dead in one sense, but not in another. They belonged to the past, some of them to the dim historic past (as I presently discovered), but their limbs were not those of

tons; their cheeks had the natural hue of health; and they wore, not the attire of the charnel-house, but the clothing incident to their epoch, and, indeed, in many cases, the actual garments which they had worn in life. All details, however, were a matter of subsequent investigation. For the moment, I knew nothing except that I was surrounded by a motley group of human beings, the representatives, as it at first seemed (to judge by their apparel), of all ages of history, from the Conquest up to yesterday, and of all social ranks, from the monarch to Jack Cade. There were men in golden and steel armour, mounted on noble steeds, themselves caparisoned in steel; and there were varlets in buff jerkins on foot. There were kings and queens of very early epochs, and there were also the chief persons mentioned in the *Almanach de Gotha* for the present year; but the moderns were in a very small minority; and the females of all eras—I noticed with disappointment—were by no means so numerous as the males. I should mention, for the information of those who are unacquainted with the delicacy of my mind, that I had no night-cap nor any other unbecoming gear, such as might (and indeed certainly would) have suggested my instant withdrawal from observation. I was dressed in the evening suit which Society has economically arranged shall be equally adapted for preaching a sermon, conducting a funeral, or receiving company of the highest social position. I did not find myself overwhelmed by the mere rank of those I beheld around me. They stared at me, it is true, with calm impassive faces, and eyes that looked *unconscious* of my very presence, but I have often found

myself under 'the cold shade of the aristocracy,' and it does not make me uncomfortable in the least.

Before proceeding, let me once more assert that what I saw, I *did* see; they were not merely in the spirit—these people. I had not been reading Universal History after lobster salad, and imagined this amazing company in a nightmare, although I confess I had had the lobster salad.

Around me, but not pressing around me, stood the figures I have described, some alone, some in knots of two or three, and some again—and these the more brilliantly appareled—in groups of from ten to fifty persons. There was no sort of chronological order in their position; yet a voice seemed to whisper in my ear: 'Remember *Mangnall's Questions.*' I had been to Eton and Cambridge, but nothing that I had learned at either of those seminaries would have furnished me with the knowledge required. If the forms about me had been the heroes of ancient Greece or Rome, or the heathen deities, it would have been otherwise, but being, as they were, the chief persons of English history, it was necessary to recall the memories of early childhood in order to identify them. In the stern warrior, on the black horse, regarding me with a look that spoke of the 'black dog'—of years of vengeful and remorseless wrong-doing—I recognized the Norman, who, as Valpy has it,

> Red from Hastings' field,
> Bruised Anglia's realms beneath his iron sway.

From under those shaggy eyebrows there seemed to shoot forth wrath and ruin. His wicked lips, used to frame edicts of cruelty, seemed to cry, although his

terrible voice was dumb: 'Turn off his gas at eight precisely.' Yes, this was he who 'loved the tall deer as though he was their father,' and made it death to slay them; who laid waste five hundred villages to make forest for his sport; whose oath was 'by the splendour of God;' and of whose reign even Mangnall (who loves Princes) has no good word to say beyond 'the custom of Beheading was introduced.' Though I was well aware that the *Habeas Corpus* Act had been passed since his time (besides other restrictive measures directed against monarchs of his temperament), I fairly trembled.

Yet, let me here remark, in justice to myself, that, notwithstanding the peculiarity of my position, I was not so alarmed as might have been expected. The knowledge that in this great assemblage of the Past I was the sole (however unworthy) representative of the Present sustained me. The Early Ages and the Middle Ages do not (I reflected) comprise all history. The Nineteenth Century will in its turn be history some day, and in my hands I resolved that it should not suffer in dignity. But my knees knocked together, and a cold sweat bedewed my forehead nevertheless, when, upon my left hand, I perceived another warrior, clothed from head to foot in black armour, who held an enormous mace studded with black nails within a few inches of my unprotected head; his own head, after the fashion of the dauntless knights of his epoch, was so effectually covered in with mail, that nothing could possibly hurt it, and he wore his black visor down. Yet, despite that last circumstance, I knew that I was in the presence of the conqueror of Poitiers and of *Crécy*. His eyes, which glared through helmet bars, *too closely* set for arrow-head to enter, had an awful

gleam. It was that Prince surnamed 'the Black,' but 'whether from the colour of his armour or the truculence of his disposition,' even Mangnall has not been able to quite decide, but states that 'he died of a consumption, regretted by all.' My position was precarious in the extreme, but I repressed a rising cry of 'Police, Police!' on account of its ridiculous anachronism.

Here, again, was a condition of affairs that demands incidental notice. Although face to face with these knights, who had so long been dust, their good swords rust, and whose souls are with the saints we trust (although I for my part cannot credit *that* for one moment), yet I was fully conscious of my own high state of civilization. For *me*—by whatever mediæval darkness these poor gentlemen had been surrounded —railways had been invented, revolvers manufactured, the new Reform Bill passed, the telegraph between this country and America (a place they had never dreamed of) established, and the duty upon playing-cards taken off, or considerably reduced. Perhaps I somewhat huddle together in this enumeration the benefits of the march of intellect; but the fact is I was *Mangnallized:* my ideas—perhaps from conversing with my juvenile friends the previous evening—took the shape in which history is represented to us in that familiar little epitome; I thought of matters as though they were the 'principal events during the reign of Victoria.'

Immediately opposite to me was a third mounted warrior, who might have passed for a much nearer relative of the other two than he really was. He was even more splendidly appareled than either, and was *scratching his chin*, in a [redacted] manner, with

the handle of a gigantic battle-axe, set with gold and precious stones; beside him, whispering in his ear, was one with a fawning look, and without his armour, which had been lost in 'the Wash.'

'I wish,' the crowned knight seemed to reply, 'that you were a little more straightforward, John; and it's no use your calling me *Acerrimus Ajax*, for I am *not* very sharp, and never shall be, but my axe *is*.' It was impossible to mistake the expression of his eyes, and I felt very pleased to think that it was a family quarrel that was for the present engaging his attention; for

> 'In war, so exciting,
> He took such delight in,' (did Cœur de Lion,)
> 'He didn't care whom he fought, so he *was* fighting.'

Upon the other side of him, and with her hand upon his bridle-rein, as though her gentle influence would have restrained him, was 'the Fair Flower of Florence,' his queen, a very striking-looking young woman, with a chignon.

It was not usual, I noticed, for monarchs to be accompanied by their consorts; in this respect, as in all others, they retained the habit of their lives; but there were other exceptions beside Berengaria. Before me was stretched a prince of unusual dimensions; his legs, in particular, extended so far that I saw no end to them: the feet were hidden (I am sorry to have to mention it) under the embroidered petticoats of some lady of the fourteenth century, who, of course, unaware of the circumstance, was engaged in conversation with her page. I knew at once that this monarch must be he 'surnamed Longshanks, on account of the great length of his legs;' *a cruel prince*, in whose reign 'geography and the use *of the globes* were introduced, and wine was sold [illegible]

as a cordial in apothecaries' shops.' On the other hand, he massacred the Welsh bards, and one wishes he had done the same for the Italian Organ Grinders.

My attention, however, distracted alike from his vices and his virtues, was riveted on a lovely lady, who, leaning over his prostrate form, appeared to be biting his left arm. But in this I was agreeably mistaken: it was Eleanor, Edward's queen, engaged in extracting the poison from the wounds inflicted on him by one of 'those enthusiasts called Assassins.' Here was an 'occupation for females' which the Social Science Congress has omitted to indicate, and yet the world has not suffered the memory of that persevering woman's good deed to perish. The Charing Cross Hotel Company (though Limited) has within these few years erected a testimonial to her virtues. Instigated by motives of delicacy, I was moving away from this interesting spectacle, when suddenly I found myself in presence of a gentleman with a splendid golden chain and cloak of costliest sables, but who seemed to be suffering from curvature of the spine. My countenance doubtless still expressing a respectful admiration for Queen Eleanor, drew a scowl of hatred and malignity from one to whom benevolence was ever displeasing and affection unknown. Although always leaning to one side, 'crooked-back Richard' had never leaned to Virtue's; and when we come to enumerate his 'best public actions,' how sad is it to find 'the institution of the Heralds' Office' among them. Even Charity, with uplifted eyes and hands, murmurs: 'What, then, must have been his worst!'

A curious contrast to Richard was presented in a [redacted] individual [redacted] simply attired in

(what seemed to me to be) wash-leather and tin; he had also a large wart upon his nose. It is impossible to describe the contempt with which he regarded the gorgeously-dressed individuals around him, though his gaze had neither cruelty nor malignity, and I felt at once that he was the brewer of Huntingdon, who knew of course what was small-beer, no matter what froth might be on the top of it. The 'two distinguishing traits' in his character (beside the wart) were, I now remembered, 'Hypocrisy and Ambition;' and also that we are indebted to him, or at least his epoch, for the 'settlement of St Helena,' and the blessings of the speaking-trumpet.

It was strange that the face of every man I had yet seen in this great company of the Past, was stern and forbidding. A gracious smile was unknown among them, and even the expression which we call bland was wanting. Some of the ladies, too, were something more than strong-minded. One wore a suit of complete armour, and wielded a sword as big as herself, which she pointed significantly towards Henry VI. And another lady, quite as beautiful, and twice her size, flashed defiance upon *her*. The one was Joan of Arc, that 'light of ancient France,' gone out for near five centuries, but beheld at least once since by Mr Tennyson; the other, Margaret of Anjou, who 'fought twelve pitched battles in her husband's cause,' whom, however, she so hen-pecked, that 'we are obliged to confess ambition, not affection, guided her actions; and, wanting principle, she may engage our pity, but has no title to our esteem and reverence.'

Was it a low sigh that drew my attention hence *to a very* different spectacle? If she gave no sigh, [illegible]

I saw the wave of life in her ebb and flow—the rise and fall of her fair bosom; and I mention it—at the risk of being considered indiscreet—because it was *the first occasion upon which I detected movement in any of this august assemblage.* I am almost sure the charming creature in question wished to attract my attention. Her eyes were modestly downcast; but although so young she wore widow's weeds, and about the corners of her exquisite mouth lurked an ensnaring smile. I tried to remember that she was 'chiefly celebrated for her beauty and her misfortunes,' but other recollections would force themselves into my mind about her. Not content with three husbands, she had encouraged followers; and she had blown up one of her husbands, not in the way which most wives use, but with gunpowder. Beautiful as she was, I turned from her with quite a sense of relief to the young girl beside her, who, however, it must be confessed, was even still more exquisitely fair. Save that each had been a queen there had been nothing in common between these two in life, except its ending; they had both had their heads chopped off, at the command of another woman. But the one, if she had not actually deserved her punishment, had walked in gay and wicked ways; while the other—she had been only ten days an unwilling queen before she fell beneath the headsman's blow. And yet in her short reign what improvements would seem to have taken place! 'Engraving and knitting stockings were invented; the Psalms of David were translated into verse; half-crowns were first coined in England; and the study of anatomy was revived.' From this last-mentioned circumstance, one would almost [illegible] that it is imp[illegible]

subject—that this sweet self-sacrificing creature, always devoted as she was to science, had perished for its benefit.

Let it not be imagined from this sportive remark that the peculiar circumstances in which I found myself placed seemed at all a laughing matter. The sudden terror which seized me on the realization of my position —the one living man in a countless assemblage of the distinguished Dead!—had indeed passed away, but it was succeeded by a sense of awe and mental oppression, from which I vainly strove to escape by an affectation of jocularity. My situation reminded me of that of a small and pusillanimous dog in a field of cows, who surround him in an ever-decreasing circle, so that wherever he turns there is a cow with a fixed expression of countenance. It is true that in this Walhalla the figures did not move (with the slight exception I have ventured to hint at), but they stared with a fixedness not to be found in cows. Whithersoever I turned, their eyes seemed to follow me, and what was peculiarly embarrassing, they evidently suspended the conversation which their positions showed they had been engaged in, until I should relieve them of my presence.

These conversations, to which I was unfortunately not permitted to listen, must have been more remarkable than even those imaginary ones narrated by Savage Landor. How curious, for instance, would it have been to hear the views of Lady Jane Grey and Mary of Scotland (which they were doubtless in the act of interchanging) respecting Mary of England and Elizabeth. Perhaps the gentle wife of Guildford Dudley *might have* found some excuses for the former, but [redacted] *may depend* upon it that the wife of De[redacted]

others) found none for Queen Bess, and did not hesitate to express what she thought of her, notwithstanding that the Virgin Queen—'No better than she should be, Jane, you may take my word for it'—stood within earshot, her ruff sticking up about her ears like the tail of an angry turkey-cock. I should also have liked to hear what Charles I. had to say to Oliver Cromwell, in explanation of that unpleasant business at Whitehall, although whatever he said, I doubt whether Oliver, with his long experience of the value of his Majesty's word, would have believed him. I wondered if bluff King Hal, surrounded as he was by his six wives, was making it so plain to some of them, as Mr Froude has endeavoured to do, that he was one of the best of husbands as well as wisest of princes; and if William III., with his stiff manner and pointed forefinger, succeeded in persuading his father-in-law that honesty (and abdication) was the best policy. But speculation and curiosity were, as I have confessed, by no means my predominant feelings; the sense of isolation overwhelmed me, and would have of itself caused my withdrawal from that dread company, had not a circumstance occurred which hastened my exit very much. I was looking at Isabella of Calais with considerable interest—she had three hundred waiting-women (if you remember), and doubtless dresses in numerical proportion to afford those ladies their perquisites—and wondering how much pin-money that fool Richard II. allowed her, when an old gentleman in a blue coat and brass buttons, who stood near her, turned his bald head sharply round, with a click, and offered me a pinch of snuff. I knew from the pictures of him that this Cobbett, and

rightly guessed that the action was intended in approval of my economical sentiments; but his turning round in this way gave *me* such a turn (upon the principle of the well-known proverb) that I thought I should have dropped. Suppose they all began to turn their heads and offer me pinches—or worse, maybe, than pinches! Suppose Queen Eleanor should get up, for instance, and ask me to take my turn at extracting poison—— I rushed from the gilded chamber, and pushing past Charles II., who was holding out his hand in an affable and characteristic manner, was so unfortunate as to separate it from the rest of his body. I saw it drop with all its wealth of jewels; I heard it fall upon the polished floor; and then I fled, like a madman, to find myself in a worse room, and amid much worse company.

It is one of the mistakes that Republicans fall into to imagine that monarchs are the most disreputable of all associates, and the air of courts the most unwholesome of all atmospheres. There is at least one exception to this theory—namely, the company of criminals and the atmosphere of the gallows. Yet these were what I was now introduced to, before I could say, or even think of saying, Jack Robinson.

Imagine an apartment, small by comparison with that from which I had just escaped, but still spacious, hung entirely with black, and filled with the most repulsive persons that have ever expiated their crimes upon the scaffold. There were only two-and-forty of these individuals, it is true, in place of many hundreds of historical characters; but then, *per contra*, every one *of these* was a murderer! The most diabolical speci*mens of all* humanity were here to be found collected

from every clime, without prejudice as to rank, or sex, or colour. Nana Sahib, the agreeable Hindu butcher, stood face to face with Dr Couty de la Pommerais, the most gentlemanly of Parisian poisoners. Mr James Greenacre, by whose conduct Miss Hannah Brown was so dreadfully cut up, was in close confab with Mrs Catherine Wilson, whose characteristics he doubtless appreciated, and to whom perhaps he had just remarked that he only wished he had met her earlier. Mr Daniel Good and Mr Dove were smiling at one another significantly, as though they appreciated the humour of their surnames; and Ravaillac seemed to have some tacit understanding with Mr William Hunt, who took a cab by the hour for the purpose of destroying in it his wife and family. Most of these unpleasant persons were standing up in a sort of dock (of course, a dry one), as they appeared at their trial, but a few of the choicer spirits were scattered about the room at large, and among them Messrs Burke and Hare, a firm that, many years ago, made itself obnoxious to all society in Edinburgh, with the exception of the medical profession. I had drawn near these gentlemen in the hope (I confess) of overhearing anything they might happen to say about body-snatching, when suddenly *both of them* turned round, with a click, and confronted me with an indescribable expression.

Fleeing from their proximity, I rushed up some wooden steps leading to nowhere particular, and found myself beneath the guillotine, and opposite THE MOST EXTRAORDINARY RELIC IN THE WORLD! 'The Original Knife and Lunette that decapitated twenty-two thousand persons—among whom were Louis XVI., Marie-Antoinette, Madame Elisabeth, Orleans, and

Robespierre—and shed the best and worst blood in France.'

Mon Dieu! What memories, if that rusty blade could speak, might it narrate! What sights of infamy, of pity, of despair, must it have seen! What seas of blood and tears! What—

'*What* are you doing on with that ere waluable relict?' cried a terrible voice, 'a spiling of its edge with your thumb; and how do you come here at this time o' night, hours and hours after this Hexhibition is closed—just tell me that, my pippin?'

The speaker was an officer of justice of the nineteenth century; the hour, as he hinted, was an untimely one; and the place was Madame Tussaud's Historical Gallery in Baker Street.

'I am not your pippin,' returned I with some dignity; 'but I allow that my presence here demands some explanation. I went to the Derby yesterday, and came home dead-tired. I dined, and accompanied some young people in the evening, with their parents, to this confounded Exhibition. Incautiously yielding to a natural temptation—that of sitting down—I fell asleep upon a sofa in yonder room, and was doubtless taken by the visitors for wax-work. At all events, nobody meddled with me, and when the time came for closing, I was shut in with the other Objects of Interest.'

'It's a very queer story,' said the policeman doubtfully.

'But it's true, nevertheless,' said I. And such was the respectability of my appearance, and the genuineness of the half-crown which I tendered him, that *he at once* accorded to my tale that credit which I hope *my readers* will not refuse.

MY FINANCIAL OPERATION.

If it is possible for an inhabitant of the same metropolis with Rothschild and Baring to know as little of commercial affairs as an agriculturist in the Black Country does of mining, then am I that man. If it is not possible, then am I the nearest approximation to such a phenomenon. What caviare is to the multitude, so is the City Article of my matutinal *Times* to me. It is less than nothing to me to read that railways are 'steady,' or that mines are 'firm:' both statements are contrary to my own experience as a traveller and an observer; but I am aware that the expressions are metaphorical, and I do not pry into their meaning. If, on the other hand, the market is pronounced to be 'flat,' which corroborates my knowledge of markets so far as it goes, I am not thereby puffed up to imagine that I understand the statement. When I possess myself of the fact that 'shoulders and offal [in the Trade Report] are in larger supply, but not so much wanted,' it excites no astonishment within me; it is true that I hate shoulders, and as for offal, I have never been reduced by shipwreck or other calamity to be in a position to give an opinion, but I am aware that there are [illegible]

world—and especially in the world of commerce—about whose tastes I know nothing; I simply say 'very good,' with the same trusting acquiescence with which I learn that gutta-percha is 'depressed' or pig-iron 'lively.'

People with whom I mix do not talk of such things, and if they did, would only display their ignorance. Not one of my ordinary associates—no, not one—although many of them are very funded, can tell me what consols mean by being 'at $86\frac{7}{8}$ for delivery, and $85\frac{5}{8}$ ex div. for the account.' One would have thought 'ex div.' was Latin, but that it is not put in italics; and as for the fractions—really running matters so very fine as that seems to smack not a little of pedantry. Nevertheless, I do not affect that North American Indian indifference to all things out of my special sphere that is professed by some of my acquaintance; I have preserved, thank goodness, my natural curiosity; and when the newspaper informed me, in another place besides its ordinary commercial column, upon a certain Friday in May, that there was a Panic in the City, I at once determined to go and see it. I could not prevail upon any of my West End friends to accompany me: one had to meet a pair of sister-equestrians in Rotten Row, to neither of whom, being co-heiresses, he could make up his mind to propose, but was always wishing himself a Mormon; another was going to look at a chestnut at Tattersall's; a third would not have given up his daily rubber at the *Portland* to see St Paul's lit up from vaults to cupola. If the Panic was anything worth seeing, they said, I might depend upon it that it would come to St James's Hall, or the Hanover Square Rooms, in time.

This was annoying, because it necessitated the

pense of conveyance, instead, as usual, of my using a friend's carriage. I am not rich myself, but I am thankful to say that I am the only person in that position among my associates; I could have had a hind-seat on a drag to Richmond, or have been accommodated (if I didn't mind sitting with my back to the horses) with a place in a barouche to Greenwich that very day; but since nobody could be prevailed upon to turn his horses' heads, for my sake, towards the Bank, I took a return-ticket to Farringdon Street by the Metropolitan Railway. A very curious affair is that underground line, and well worthy of a visit from persons of condition. It seems, however, to be exclusively used by the commercial classes, and by various old ladies, who keep their eyes shut long after they emerge from the tunnels, and are entirely dependent upon their fellow-travellers for discriminating the ordinary stoppages of the train from alarming accidents. However, they and I had one little peculiarity in common—we had neither of us any distinct idea of where we were going to, or for what purpose.

'Mr Brown,' explained one, moved to do so by that incomprehensible instinct which goads unprotected females of a certain age to make confidants of the general public—'Mr Brown is to meet me at Margate —no, Moorgate Street Station. If anything was to prevent him, gracious knows what I should do. We are going to the Royal Exchange, I believe, to draw my dividends, of which I have given them warning. He tells me there is not a moment to be lost. What terrible times we live in, gentlemen! Goodness, mercy on me, if here isn't another tunnel!' One ancient dame [illegible] attempt to [illegible]

how her grandfather made his money in Bubbles: 'Bubbles,' she said, 'which were of a very peculiar sort, and only to be procured in the South Seas.' This lady very nearly put me in an embarrassing position by asking my opinion, as a man of business, of the pecuniary condition of her Joint-stock Bank, of which, however, she had fortunately forgotten the name. 'Down at Bullock-Smithey,' said she, 'everybody is ready to swear by it. Lawyer Sharpshins always keeps an account there, and *he's* no fool, so you may know what is thought of it.' 'Perhaps,' observed a sarcastic old gentleman upon my right, taking the handle of his umbrella out of his mouth, for the first time, in order to give point to the observation—'perhaps he overdraws his account, ma'am.'

'I dare say he does, sir,' returned the lady earnestly, 'for he is a very rich man; and yet *I* can't help wishing, for nothing seems safe in these times, that I was not a director.'

At these words, all the old gentlemen in the carriage took the handles of their umbrellas out of their mouths with one consent.

'A director, ma'am—you surely are not on the direction,' observed two or three.

O yes, gentlemen; there's no mistake about that,' replied the lady with dignity. 'I don't know what you mean by "on the direction," because, as I say, I've forgotten the address; but Mr Robinson, my brother-in-law's clerk, and a very respectable young man, who is to meet me at Alderman's Gate, he will tell you all about it. Why, I have a matter of eight *hundred pounds*—there's the exact sum written in my *pocket-book*, if you'd like to read it, for my eyes ain't

equal to it by this light—talk of gas, give me candles say I any day of the week, or leastways after dark. Well, if I've got near upon a thousand pounds in a bank, I suppose you'll not deny that I'm a director.'

'She's a depositor,' observed the sarcastic old gentleman testily; 'of course she's a depositor.'

'What's he saying?' inquired the female capitalist, addressing herself to me. If he is saying anything disrespectful, I shall put the matter into the hands of my brother-in-law.'

'I don't think he meant anything objectionable, madam,' returned I soothingly.

'Certainly not, ma'am,' added her involuntary detractor with a chuckle; 'though if I had called you a shareholder you might have had some reason for objecting to it.'

'If you had ventured to use any impertinence, sir, I should have complained to Mr Robinson's clerk,' replied the lady; and so, to my great relief, the matter dropped.

It was certainly strange enough to uninitiated ears to listen to the talk among the men during the intervals of suction. What was 'going' and what was 'likely to go;' what had 'stopped' and what had 'gone,' which seemed to be convertible terms; and, in particular, with reference to these last misfortunes, how 'every one with half an eye had been aware of the rottenness of the concern for these last six months.' It was very like the conversation of good male society during the Derby week; only, instead of horses breaking down or getting 'scratched,' it was concerning joint-stock banks and discount-houses. I ventured to inquire of one of these worthies where was the best *place, in his opinion,* from which to see the Panic.

'You will see it everywhere,' said he, not without some symptoms of irritation: 'but if you are so exceedingly anxious, you had better hire a window in Lombard Street.'

I thanked him very much; but having once put that identical device into effect (with my Lord Tom Noddy and others) upon the occasion of a certain public exhibition in the Old Bailey, and found it to be very expensive, I determined to take my chance upon the pavement; perhaps there would be cane-bottomed chairs on hire, or other temporary elevations to stand upon, from which the sight could be seen at a more reasonable figure. I regret to say, however, that neither by the authorities nor by private enterprise were any steps whatever taken to provide for the general advantage in this respect. The City is certainly centuries behind the West End in matters of civilization. It is not generally known that the Lord Mayor's Feast is, with the exception of turtle-soup, a cold collation, yet such is the humiliating fact. Nay, if you feel the want of luncheon (as I did) while in this barbarous district, I am sure I don't know where a gentleman is to find it. However, I am anticipating my difficulties. The first time I caught sight of the Panic was in a place called Cheapside, opposite a clockmaker's of the name of Bennett. It is true that the streets had been all inconveniently full, and the crossing of them attended with extreme peril; but that I have read is always the case. A French writer of the day has even founded a theory to account for the indomitable character of the British race—'nation of shopkeepers' although they *be* — upon the dangers to which they are daily exposed *from* wheel and hoof. He calculates also the

pressure of the crowd in the neighbourhood of Threadneedle Street, on dividend-days, as so many pounds to the square inch, and thereby explains our marvellous powers of endurance. It is a great mistake, he goes on to say, to suppose that City people are of sedentary habits: the stockbrokers keep their hats on even in their offices, so that they may be ready to rush out and purchase stock at discount, or sell it at a premium; while the rest of the commercial public amuse themselves at unequal but frequent intervals in running on the banks. That was what they were doing on that Friday when I went into the City. At first, as I have said, I thought that Mr Bennett's was a bank; but the crowd had gathered in front of his establishment for no other purpose than to see the figures over his great clock—symbolizing, as I was informed, 'the small-hours'—come forth and strike the quarters. No sooner had these proclaimed it two o'clock, than an echo within me replied, 'And luncheon-time.' But I am a person (when once roused) of an inflexible resolution, and I had as yet seen nothing of the Panic. I had heard, however, enough and to spare. Every other person who met or passed me was talking of that, and nothing else. The only countenances which were not serious were those of the crossing-sweepers, who keep all the money they possess where the monkeys hoard their gingerbread—in their mouths. It was a day of disgrace to Dives, and Lazarus, exempt from fear, was enjoying his rare advantage.

'Got a fourpenny *left*, sir? Got a copper, please, sir? Nothin' but Overend and Gurney's paper, eh? Dear me!' It was the world turned upside down, with a *vengeance*. Opposite the great house, with its closed

doors—so frequent on their hinges a few hours ago—stood an enormous gathering of people of all ranks, looking at it with a strange sort of awe, as though it were the palace of their king, and he was lying dead there; and to many of them so it doubtless was.

But yesterday the word of Cæsar (or at least his bond) might have stood against the world; now lay he there, and none so poor that he would back his bill! 'Ten millions! That's a hundred hundred thousand pounds,' whispered one to his friend, in a hushed voice, as though he were speaking of the virtues of some great man departed. 'A thousand fortunes gone at a single blow.'

'Ay, and the poor people it has ruined,' returned the other; 'that is still worse to think about! The widows and the unconscious orphans, on some of whom, perhaps, it were better that the house itself had fallen, like the walls of Jericho, and spared them the ills to come.'

No wonder the crowd was sad and silent. It was looking upon the ruin of a hundred happy households, and on what would for the future be but a splendid monument to commemorate the 'better days' that they had known. The very sight of it seemed to decide some who were debating about the propriety of letting their money lie where it was, for they walked hastily away to join the crowd that was besieging the neighbouring bank. Lombard Street itself was well-nigh impassable; not, indeed, from the Panic, so much as from the throng who, like myself, had come to look at it; and ever and anon, as some quiet brougham, with steady *country* coachman, drove up to the bank door, with a *frightened*-looking lady for its occupant, [illegible]

clutching her cheque-book, the crowd would give a great cheer to reassure her, and another when she came out with her money and a beaming face. Once, too, a tremendous shout rang forth as a cab, guarded by policemen, drove slowly up, and certain heavy packages were carried into the threatened house, for we all knew that it was Gold. That was what all such houses prayed for on that day. How the poor old lady in Threadneedle Street was importuned and worried for those four-and-twenty hours by her prodigal children! How they begged of her for her autograph and miniature, and the watermark that never fails to cool the fever of impatient demand; how they went down on their knees, and offered promises to pay—securities to which nobody would have had a word of objection two days ago—but at which she now shook her head, and wiping her spectacles, declined to have anything to do with, or, if consenting, tendered them but nine-tenths of what they asked, keeping the rest for usury; and even for that they were grateful, waiting in her parlour with beating heart—for even now the help might come too late—while she descended into her ample vaults and brought up, like Aladdin of old, her bags of treasure, and bade them make the most of it, for that she had not much more left than what she wanted for her own use. 'A pretty thing,' said the old lady, 'if people should come to my door, and make a racket as they do at yours, asking for their own, and should find that it was not here. For *my* promises are not like pie-crust, I would have you know.'

There was nothing in the least like pie-crust to be seen in Lombard Street, nor anything eatable whatever. [illegible] which is said to be open to

rich and poor alike, might just as well have been closed, for I found nothing in it but auctions. Everything was 'going, going' in the City on that fatal day. There were some oyster-shops, it is true, but who eats oysters in the month of May? And there were a good many public-houses with swing-doors, upon which was written Luncheon Bar; but I cannot feed standing like a stalled ox. Then I suddenly remembered that I had once met a merchant-prince, who had impressed me favourably with his class by hinting, that if ever I came by his little place in the City, I would look in and lunch. If it had not been for the Panic, I should certainly never have reaped any benefit from the invitation; but he had given it in all good faith. The wing of a chicken, and a tumbler of iced hock and Seltzer water, was all that I meant to trouble him for, and then I would light my cigar, and go home in a Hansom. I had no difficulty in finding the establishment over which Fortunatus Fipps presided—he was called Fortunatus because, although he had been connected with trade on a large scale for more than a quarter of a century, he had never yet been in the Gazette—but it was not so easy to find the gentleman himself. On my first arrival, there was quite a commotion among his clerks, who were all looking very white and idle, and one of them was running off with my card into the private sanctum of his proprietor; but upon my letting them know, in answer to inquiries, that I was *not* the accommodating gentleman momentarily expected from the Bank of England, he said he didn't think Mr Fipps could see me that day, unless I came by special appointment.

'That is just my case,' said I decisively; '

pliments to Fortu—Mr Fipps, I mean—and I am come to lunch.

The card was accordingly taken in, and after a little delay I was admitted into the sanctuary.

Fipps was not looking by any means so brilliant as when I had seen him last, which was in the smoking-room of a great ex-minister: his hair was dishevelled, as though recently combed with the fingers; his face was very pale, and he wore an anxious and distracted air, as though he were listening for something—such as the fall in the Bank rate of discount; but I was so full of my luncheon, or rather of the want of it, that I failed to notice these little peculiarities, although I remembered them afterwards.

'Well, Mr Fipps,' said I with gaiety, 'you see I am come for my bond.'

'I am not aware, sir, that we have anything of yours,' replied Fortunatus tartly, who was evidently in total ignorance as to my identity.

'My very dear sir,' said I in soothing tones, 'I do not refer to any business transaction. When I say my bond, I mean my pound of flesh (if cold chicken can be so denominated), the luncheon you promised me, when I had the pleasure of meeting you at Lord Tadpole's.'

'Yes, yes,' returned Fortunatus, forcing a smile; 'I remember now quite well: a charming dinner; no such thing as tightness anywhere; no symptom of a crisis. But I beg your pardon. Lunch, lunch. What will you have for lunch? [He was talking like a man in a dream.] We have got some first-rate bills on Liverpool; names you can have no possible objection to.'

'Ahem,' said I, purposely sneezing with great

financial position. 'If you'd only give me a glass of sherry; but don't let me hurry you, pray.'

'Sherry?' echoed he gravely, 'and don't let me hurry you, pray. Spanish Passives. No. East del Rey—the sacrifice is enormous.'

'Then let me have some cheaper wine,' replied I cheerfully.

'*It's all locked up*,' returned he in mysterious tones. 'Four hundred and eighty-five thousand'——

'Dozen?' cried I, making a rapid estimate of the possible extent of cellarage under the establishment. 'I don't believe it.'

'Hush,' said he, mysteriously, 'nobody does: but for Heaven's sake don't talk so loud.'

'Chicken!' ejaculated I, with resolution.

'No, sir,' returned Fipps, simply; 'I have no apprehension of the result, I do assure you—that is, of the eventual result. In that iron chest'——

'Ay, the Refrigerator!' exclaimed I; 'why the deuce did you not mention that at first?' and I clapped my hands together for very joy. The unaccustomed noise seemed to awake Fortunatus from his lethargy.

'I beg your pardon,' said he, frankly, and passing his hand across his forehead; 'but I have been immersed in calculations all the morning; and I thought I was talking to—to a gentleman connected with another banking establishment with which we are—or at least hope to be—connected. Lunch! certainly; the hospitalities of the City must be dispensed with—I mean must be dispensed. You have no shares in any joint-stock bank, I presume.'

'*Not* that I know of,' replied I; 'oh no, I'm [illegible] *I'm not*—that is, so sure as a man can be [illegible] *o head* for business. No; I've nothing

account with the north-west branch of the Imperial Adamantine.'

'What!' exclaimed Fortunatus, in alarm. 'Have you money in *that* bank?'

'Yes,' said I, 'I think I've got one hundred and twenty pounds in it: that's all.'

'My dear sir,' returned Mr Fipps with solemnity, and laying his hand upon my arm; 'that is one of the banks that people are talking about: it is true,' added he hastily, 'that all of us—even the most solvent firms—are subject, upon occasions of this kind, to groundless suspicion; but the Imperial Adamantine—I suppose you have your cheque-book with you.'

'Gracious goodness!' replied I, 'I should just as soon think of coming out with my boot-jack: it's in my desk, of course.'

'Then take my advice, and go home at once and draw the money. Not a moment is to be lost: your bank will be closed at four, perhaps for ever. The nearest metropolitan station is the fourth turning on the left. I am so glad to have had this opportunity of—of—giving you this timely warning—if indeed you are so fortunate as to *be* in time. This is your umbrella, I think'—

I didn't know whether it was or not, but I snatched up the one that happened to be the nearest, and ran out of the house with a speed that astonished myself almost as much as it seemed to surprise other people. 'He's a-running on his bank!' cried one of those unfeeling crossing-sweepers, who, in my judgment, since they have no property qualification, should not be permitted to express their opinions, even though they chance to

not, of course, in motion—and arrived at my own lodgings at 3.10, or, in other words, with fifty minutes to spare. But it was not that which caused me to hesitate in my proposed financial operation. I had met an old gentleman in the train, to whom I had confided the cause of my excitement, and not only had he greatly reassured me in the matter of the Imperial Adamantine, but he had informed me that it was thoughtless people like myself who caused the Panic. To think that *I*, who had gone into the City merely to look at it, should be accused of such a terrible thing! At the same time, if everybody drew their money out, as I was about to do, he proved to me that every bank in the country must needs collapse. Altogether I was so ashamed of my intention—it seemed such an ungentlemanly sort of thing to do—that I determined to send my landlady to transact the matter instead of myself. Moreover, since even then I had my scruples, I only drew the cheque for a hundred and fifteen guineas, leaving the Imperial Adamantine Banking Company exactly four pounds five to break upon, if they were resolutely determined so to do. Never, surely, were generosity and security more happily combined than by this ingenious device. But the Imperial Adamantine did not break after all; nor according to the commercial intelligence (which, now that I know what a Panic is, I peruse with avidity), has it been in the least danger of breaking. I read, however, that there was a severe run on that Friday afternoon upon the great house of Fipps and Company; and I have my suspicions that, Fortunatus's mind being a little preoccupied, he may have inoculated me with his own panic, simply and solely for the purpose of getting me out of the way.

A TREASURE OF A SERVANT.

I AM not a man to have hobbies—far from it—but everybody, I suppose, likes one thing more than another, and what I like is plate; good serviceable gold and silver, such as is pleasant to see upon one's table, whether by sunshine or candle-light, and which one likes one's guests to see. It is whispered by malignant persons (sb at least certain good-natured friends tell me), that I should not give so many dinner-parties, if it were not to exhibit these costly articles. I am not conscious of such a motive for my hospitality; but if it exist, it need not surely be objected to; it is I who have to pay for the weakness, and not my friends—as happens in some cases I could name. If I possessed a selection of the most hideous china in the whole world, and filled my drawing-rooms with unhappy persons *after* dinner, who are compelled to bow down before Bel and the Dragon (if I may say so without impiety), as Colonel Twankay does, for instance, *then* I grant you there would be some ground of complaint: or if I invited people to 'at-homes' every Wednesday evening (a most impertinent form of invitation, in my opinion), in order that they should have the pleasure of

confute Profess[illegible] on the question

of the Theory of Development, as my good friend Dr Twistie is in the habit of doing: or if I had a daughter with high notes, and inveigled the Unwary with the bait of 'a little music,' like my neighbour, the Hon. Mrs Matcham—so proud and stuck up, that she is as often as not called Lucifer Matcham—who, I dare say, thinks her invitations quite an honour to the recipients —— But there; I have no patience to speak about such people. These, forsooth, are the persons—*these*, with their tea and thin bread and butter, and three-penny-worth of cream, and with what they call 'a light refreshment' to follow—weak lemonade and cheap ices —to charge me with the crime of Ostentation! If that means to 'show off,' which, I believe, is its strictly classical sense, I should like to know which of us four is the most guilty. At all events, there is something *beside* show in my little entertainments; my dishes, if they do happen to be silver-gilt (and really the moulding is worth looking at), have, at all events, something *in* them; I don't ask men to put on black broad-cloth and polished leather boots, in this sultry June, with nothing to come of it all except perspiration. That's vulgar, according to Mrs Matcham, I have no doubt; but it's true. If one could cool one's self by means of the frigidity of one's hostess, her drawing-room would be a very pleasant place; but as it is, I fancy folks prefer the contemplation of my ice-pails — as pretty a device in frosted silver, by the by, as you will often see.

Do not imagine that I am annoyed: towards persons who, when they *do* give a dinner-party, omit to *supply* ice in this weather (though it would cost them *but one* penny a head), I am incapable of [redacted]

ing. Ostentation, indeed! At this very moment—11.30 P.M., and the thermometer next door at 85 degrees at the very least, I'll answer for it—I can hear Miss Lucifer Matcham screaming through the wall.

It was not looking at my gold and silver plate, I suppose, which made my mother-in-law bilious; she might have stopped a long time, at some other houses I could name, without getting the quality, or even the quantity, of food that would produce an indisposition of that kind. Mind, I don't blame her; she gave way to an amiable weakness (it was truffles), poor lady, and she suffered for it more than enough. Neither was it mere Ostentation, I suppose, that caused me to provide her with a sick-nurse—Mrs Maqueechy. My wife, of course, did everything she could for her mother, but ours is a large household, and we see a good deal of company; so we thought it best to provide a person exclusively to wait upon her. We had the highest written testimonials as to character, and her behaviour was everything we could wish. Instead of 'interfering,' and setting the other domestics by the ears, as persons of her class are accused of doing, she kept herself *to* herself, and when anything was wanted, she would fetch it in person, rather than give anybody trouble. I used to meet her walking all over the house upon these little errands, and I noticed, to her great credit, that though she must have weighed nearly twelve stone, she made no noise. She so won upon me, indeed—for I am not at all a man to be familiar with my inferiors, and should certainly *not* 'take a pleasure in exhibiting my plate to a maid-of-all-work or a crossing-sweeper,' as some people have been so good as to say, I was so pleased with Mrs Maqueechy's

quiet and respectful manners, that finding her upon one occasion in the dining-room admiring my two new shield-shaped salvers upon the sideboard, I took pains to explain to her the design of the engraving, and especially the embossed cipher; with which her intelligent mind was highly pleased. In short, she was a perfect treasure, and if we had wanted a housekeeper, or any confidential servant of that sort, I should certainly have retained Mrs Maqueechy in that position, after her duties as a sick-nurse were concluded; and in that idea my wife entirely concurred. Mrs Maqueechy was neither young nor good-looking, but a more thoroughly respectable-looking person, in her condition of life, it was not easy to find. Although I had every confidence in Bowles—Bowles has had the charge of my plate for these ten years—yet there seemed somehow to be a double warranty for the safeguard of my property, while Mrs Maqueechy was under my roof. She was not a suspicious person, far from it; but she once remarked to me, in a meaning way, that the charge of so much valuable plate was a great responsibility, and would be even a temptation to some people; and I saw she kept her eye on Bowles. As the event proved, alas, Mrs Maqueechy had only too good reason to do so.

Last Wednesday, we happened to have rather a large dinner-party; I had been dining out a good deal at various clubs lately, and of course it was necessary to invite my entertainers in return. It is not that I will ask *anybody* to come and admire my plate, but certainly some of the men were not intimate friends *of mine*, but only acquaintances. However, I suppose the fact of persons belonging to such clubs as

frequent, is a sufficient guarantee for their social position. They were quite good enough, in my opinion, to meet Mrs Lucifer Matcham at all events, and they met her. The dinner had gone off uncommonly well. The shield-shaped salvers had been very much admired, and so had my new tureen. The ladies had retired to the drawing-room, and I had just passed the vine-leaf claret-jug to Colonel Twankay (on which the old hunks did not pass the slightest remark, by the by) when Bowles stooped down and whispered in my ear that a person wished to see me in the Hall, upon very important business.

'Ask him what it is,' said I. 'It is impossible that I can leave my guests.'

'I did ask him, sir, and he refuses to state,' replied Bowles confidentially. 'It is my opinion he's a begging-letter impostor; but he says he must see you in person.'

I was upon the point of saying, 'Tell him to leave the house,' when something or other in Bowles's manner struck me so decidedly that I resolved not to do so. Why should he say a man, about whom he could know nothing, was a begging-letter impostor? Perhaps I placed rather too much confidence in my butler, as Mrs Maqueechy had hinted that very morning. Actuated by a vague presentiment of distrust and danger, I rose from table, made a hasty apology to my friends, and went with Bowles into the Hall. A shabby-genteel sort of person, answering, indeed, very tolerably to my man's description of him, was standing by the umbrella-stall.

'What is it you want with me, sir?' said I, in a magisterial tone.

'One minute's private conversation with you,' replied he, with a glance at the butler.

'You may leave us, Bowles,' said I; and he withdrew accordingly, although, I am bound to say, very unwillingly. The thought flashed across me like lightning, 'Bowles has something to fear from this man's disclosure;' and the next words of my visitor confirmed me in the suspicion.

'I am a member of the detective police force,' said he, 'and I come to warn you that there is something wrong in your house.'

'Nothing to do with my plate, I hope?' said I with considerable anxiety.

'Very much to do with it, sir,' returned he grimly. 'There is a thief harboured here; and by this time to-morrow, you will not have a silver spoon in your possession, unless I find him out. I must see every soul you have got under your roof.'

'A thief!' said I; 'impossible! I never have even so much as a strange waiter. That butler has lived with me for ten years, and my two footmen even longer. I will answer for their honesty.'

'Let me *see* 'em, sir; that's all *I* want,' was the decisive reply.

'It is not Bowles?' said I appealingly; 'don't say it's Bowles:' but, although it agitated me beyond measure to think that I should have to trust a new butler with all my plate, I confess that I had a horrible idea that it *was* Bowles.

'I think not,' said the detective quietly. 'Let me see the other men.' I turned the gas-light over the *door as* high as it would go, and called them both *into the* Hall.

'It is not them,' said he. 'What other men have you got in the house?'

'None but my guests,' said I, 'here in the dining-room.'

'Do you know them all very well, sir? Are none of them mere acquaintances or neighbours?'

'Well,' returned I with hesitation, and feeling very glad that Mrs Matcham was not a third party to this interview, 'I know some, of course, better than others.'

'Just so,' said the detective quietly: 'then I must see them.'

This was a shocking proposal, and made me feel hot all over: but still I was not going to run any risk with those shield-shaped salvers. Major Pinkey, I now remembered, had expressed a great wish to examine them, and perhaps that fact had had some weight in my inviting him to dinner. Who the deuce Major Pinkey *was*—except that he belonged to my club—I certainly knew no more than the detective, and perhaps a great deal less. Still it seemed a very base thing to open the dining-room door, and let this fellow scrutinize my guests, in hopes to find a scoundrel among them.

'Upon my life,' said I, 'Mr Detective, I can't do it.'

'Very right, sir—very natural,' replied he, smiling in his quiet way. 'It would never do, would it? But look you, sir: I'm a waiter, a hired waiter. Who is to know that I have not business at your sideboard? In one minute, I could run my eye over the whole lot, and spot my man, if he's there, as sure as taxes.'

I did not like even this arrangement; but still it seemed the only thing to be done. So, sending for Bowles, I arranged with him the plan of proceeding,

and then returned to the dining-room. My feelings are not to be described, when a few minutes afterwards, sitting at the head of my table, I heard the door open, and knew that the detective was in the room. He was much longer at the sideboard than he had promised to be, and every hair on my head seemed to stand upright all the time. Suppose he should suddenly fall on Major Pinkey, and cry, 'This is my man!' Nay, suppose Colonel Twankay himself should prove to be the offender! I seemed to have lost all confidence in my fellow-creatures. After a period of anxiety no measure of time could indicate, the supposed waiter took his departure.

'You've got a new man, I see,' said Dr Twistie carelessly: 'with so much plate about, I hope you are satisfied about his honesty.'

I was exceedingly glad to find old Twistie was honest, and had not been taken by the shirt frill, and walked off to Bow Street; but of course I did not tell him *that*.

'Please, sir, you're wanted again,' whispered Bowles as he brought in another bottle of claret.

'If the kitchen chimney is on fire, I am glad we have dined,' observed the major good-humouredly: 'if I can be of any service, pray command me.'

I did not inform him what a relief it was to me that he was *not* wanted, but remarking that it was only a little domestic matter, I once more sought the inspector.

'The one I'm after is not among *them*, sir, *so far as I know*,' observed this official, jerking his thumb in the *direction* of the dining-room. 'Are you sure there are no more men in your house beside those I have

'Yes,' said I; 'there are no more.'

'Then now I must have a look at the ladies.'

'The ladies!' cried I, aghast at this proposal. 'You don't want to go into the drawing-room?'

'It would be more satisfactory,' observed the detective coolly. 'My information is very re-liable. But, at all events, who is there?'

'Well,' said I, 'my wife is there for one: you have no information against *her*, I suppose?

He nodded satisfaction so far.

'Then there's the Honourable Mrs Matcham and her daughter.'

'Safe!' rejoined the detective, checking them off on his fingers.

'Mrs Twistie of Regalia Square, and Lady Bobbington.'

'I suppose they're all right,' remarked my inquisitor doubtfully. 'Are you sure there are no more?'

'There's my mother-in-law, but she's in her own room, and exceedingly unwell.'

'Very good,' observed the detective inconsequentially. 'There's a Plant somewhere in this house, however; you may take your oath of that, and very likely in the last place where you would ever look for it; so now I must see the maids.'

It was astonishing even to myself in what complete subjugation this man had placed me Once, and once only, a terrible misgiving seized me—I was as full of suspicions by this time as a porcupine of quills, and darted them in as many directions—that the detective himself was a 'Plant' that would presently blossom into a burglar; but my overtaxed mind refused to bear this burden. If it was so, I would trust

to his clemency—just as an inhabitant of Dubernitz, deserted by Feldzeugmeister von Benedek, might have trusted to a Prussian—to leave me a silver fork or two to carry on the business of life. If this man turned out to be anything less than what he described himself to be, all authority would henceforth lose its effect with me. If Solomon had ever had to do with a metropolitan detective, he would never have spoken so slightingly of mankind. I had read of 'the grasp of the law' in works of fiction, but I had never understood the tremendous nature of that figure until I felt this gentleman's knuckles (metaphorically) inserted in my white cravat. He had to repeat, 'So now I must see the maids,' in his undeniable manner, before I could collect myself sufficiently to lead the way to the kitchen—a spot to which I should not alone have ventured to penetrate. To say that the cook and the kitchen-maid stared at the phenomena of our presence, is to underrate their powers of vision.

'Now, I dare say you have no charwoman nor any temporary assistant, my good lady, even on an occasion like the present,' observed my companion urbanely; 'but you and this young woman do all the work yourselves.'

'That's true, sir; we don't mind hard work now and then,' returned the cook, tossing her head; 'and besides, I don't like strangers in my kitchen,' added she with meaning, '*especially when I'm busy, and would rather have their room than their company.*'

I could have given that woman five shillings upon the spot (and I did so the next morning) for that rapid discharge of words: the detective's tongue, although I had found it so terrible a weapon, was

my domestic's needle-gun, and he retired much discomfited, I could see, notwithstanding that he strove to conceal his defeat beneath a contemptuous smile.

'Now, if I'd been an ordinary policeman, and in uniform,' whispered he to me, as we reached the Hall again, 'I could have come over that cook in no time.'

Without remarking upon this confession of defeat, I led the way up to the nursery. The servants in that department were not unused to visitors, and evidently imagined that my companion was some family-man among the guests, who had expressed a wish to 'see the dear children' in their cribs. He, on his part, immediately understood the *rôle* he was expected to play, and walked admiringly from cot to cot, as though he were a connoisseur in babes.

'Charming children, and well taken care of, I can see,' observed he, with rather a familiar nod (I thought) towards the under-nurse. 'It's neither of *them*,' he added in a low whisper. 'You have got a housemaid or two, I suppose?'

His tone was exactly that which an ogre might have used in making inquiries concerning the larder at a Cannibal inn.

The housemaids were inspected, and pronounced to be free from suspicion. 'But I cannot have seen everybody,' said he decisively.

'Yes,' said I, 'everybody, except Mrs Maqueechy.'

'Friend of the family?' inquired the detective, with a disappointed air.

'Well,' said I, 'I might almost say so. She came to us not only with the best of written characters, but my wife had an interview with her late mistress, a Mrs Oarlwie, who pronounced her a perfect treasure.'

and we ourselves have found her all that could be wished.'

'I should like to see the "perfect treasure,"' quoth the detective, smiling grimly: 'we often find them to be the very people we want.'

'Nay,' said I, 'but in this case your suspicions are quite groundless: Mrs Maqueechy is a superior person, and takes an interest in us which you seldom find in a domestic except after years of service. Besides, she is my mother-in-law's sick-nurse, and most likely they have already made their arrangements for the night. It would be a pity to disturb them.'

'I must see Mrs Maqueechy,' returned my companion gravely; 'she seems altogether too charming to be missed.'

'You detectives are clever fellows,' replied I with irritation; 'but you often spend your time very fruitlessly. It is a pity that a man can't be determined, and yet avoid being obstinate. However, since you have gone so far, you shall go through with the business.'

With that I knocked at the door, and, admitted to the sick-room, informed my mother-in-law briefly of what was taking place; while the invaluable Maqueechy retired with her usual delicacy to the dressing-room. Perhaps I spoke a little too loud — for that Mrs Maqueechy could stoop to eavesdropping, it is hard to believe — but at all events, that intelligent woman must have possessed herself of the substance of what I related, for when I opened the door to admit the officer, I found her already outside, and in his custody. *She had* endeavoured to escape through the second door *of the* dressing-room—'bolted like a rabbut,' said the

detective—but had run into the very danger she would have avoided, and there she was with a couple of handcuffs over her neat mittens.

'We know one another very well, me and Mrs Maqueechy,' observed the detective grimly. 'I was told I should find an old friend in this house, although I had no idea who it would be until you mentioned Mrs Ogilvie. She is very charitable, *she* is, in getting her fellow-creatures situations in respectable families where there happens to be a good deal of plate. It was this very night that this good lady here had engaged to open your front-door to her husband and a friend of his, who keeps a light cart in the mews yonder. Being a sick-nurse, you see, nobody would be surprised at her being about the house at all hours.—Wasn't that your little game, Mrs Maqueechy?'

'Well, I suppose it's a five-year touch?' observed that lady with philosophic coolness.

'Well, I'm afraid it is, ma'am; since that other little business in Carlton Gardens still remains unsettled.—Good-bye, sir; you will see Mrs M. again, once or twice, before you have done with her; and in the mean time you take my advice, sir, and in hiring another sick-nurse for your mother-in-law, don't you apply to Mrs Ogilvie.'

And off he walked with our 'perfect treasure.'

A NIGHT WITH THE FENIANS.

It was in March, in a certain year of political disturbance (Irish), that I found myself a guest at the Rev. Theophilus Dillon's house in the Golden Vale of Tipperary. I had just 'finished' my education, and thought myself many degrees removed in intelligence, although but a few months in time, from the status of a school-girl. That was also the private opinion of dear Eleanor, who had passed her youth at the same English seminary with myself, and to whose friendship I owed my present position at her father's house. But there was this difference between us: Nelly was as brave as the Maid of Saragossa, and I am afraid I was a bit of a coward. True, all my home-life had been passed in London, where, although processions abound, revolts are as yet quite unheard of; while Nelly's had been spent in the centre of a disaffected district, where rebellion is a chronic disease, and pike-heads as ordinary an article of manufacture as knitted stockings. I had heard of Fenianism, of course, but it was always treated as a subject of jocularity. The Irish, I was told, must always be wild about something or other, and Fenianism was the latest form of the national complaint. As for its appearance in England, my good father (whose

opinions are what are called 'extreme liberal,' I believe) always contended that the little fracas at Chester was nothing more than a well-meaning attempt on the part of that respectable but somewhat *passé* city to bring itself into general notoriety.

Under these circumstances, and indoctrinated with such views, I wrote to accept dear Eleanor's invitation at a time when many young ladies would have hesitated to pay a visit to a country-house in Ireland; but it was my ignorance, and not any natural intrepidity, that consented. Before I got half-way across the water, my valour oozed out through my daintily-gloved fingers, as I listened to the experiences and apprehensions of my fellow-voyagers. Every step I took on dry land (if the soil of Erin can so be termed by courtesy, for it rains there five days out of six, and most of the ground is bog), corroborated the fears thus imparted. A thousand times upon the way to Tipperary, I wished myself back in Pimlico; and when at last I reached the Golden Vale (upon a car with a policeman armed with a bayonet), I would gladly have exchanged my new position for safe lodgings even in Golden Square. The situation was romantic, I own: far as the eye could reach, it dwelt upon the most fertile land in all the Emerald Isle, girt by a fine range of still snow-topped mountains. The house, too, was large and comfortable, although by no means distinguished for architectural beauty. Castletower, as its name implied, was a square and very lofty edifice, consisting of no less than five stories, from the roof of which there would really have been a sublime view, had the country been loyal and quiet—but for me it was always spoiled by Fenians in the *foreground*. Every other day, we were informed that

the next night was certainly fixed upon for the general rising; and Eleanor assured me—with the mistaken idea that it would give me confidence—that neither her father nor her brothers ever went to bed without loaded revolvers beneath their pillows. The wrongs of Ireland I do not pretend to understand, but I keenly felt the injustice that had been committed upon myself in inveigling me from Cadogan Place, S.W., to a locality so fraught with peril. It was small satisfaction to me to be convinced that the Rev. Theophilus and his sons would make a stout resistance, and would never suffer one hair of my head, or even my *chignon*, to be harmed, as long as they had life to draw a hair-trigger; but what could they do against the whole country-side, with a contingent from New York to aid it, beyond enraging our assailants by a vain resistance. The very possession of those arms of precision—they had two rifles apiece at the very least—in which they put such trust would make them an object of attack in case of a rising, for it was known that the rebels stood much in need of such weapons, and indeed had both demanded and obtained them from more than one house in the neighbourhood.

'They had better not ask for *my* gun,' quoth the Rev. Theophilus grimly, 'or they will most assuredly get what they deserve—namely, its contents.' And he was just the man to keep his word. A kindly-hearted but stubborn-spirited Orange-man, inspired with the utmost contempt for the hostility of that rabble-rout of whose sudden gatherings and disappearances, isolated acts of outrage, and general evil-doings, we had new *tidings* every day: a man who, while conscientiously *performing* his sacred duties within their

very limited sphere — his parishioners numbering, I think, but sixteen souls, one of whom, although apparently thought very highly of by the household, was, to my certain knowledge, what we should call in England an idiot—a man, I say, although a spiritual pastor by profession, who seemed to me to be at least equally fitted for the command of a regiment, and as sure to draw down upon himself the vengeance of an insurrectionary movement, as the lightning-conductor upon his roof to attract the levin. His two sons inherited his character, and although following no calling beyond that of field-sports, appeared excellently adapted to be captains of irregular cavalry; fine, dashing, pleasant young fellows, but unfortunately as dead to the fact that they were living among a hostile population as any inhabitants of Clapham or Blackheath. They had all the audacity of their father, but without his intelligence; and although taking the precautions I have mentioned, they did so solely in obedience to his request, and without the slightest belief in the necessity of the case, though it was as patent as the sun at noonday.

Dear Eleanor was almost as foolish in her incredulity; but although she often rallied me upon my fears, she never rallied my courage, nor caused me to relax my vigilance on behalf of that menaced garrison, which would not be upon the alert to guard itself. There were two things in which I put my trust: first, in the Rev. Theophilus; and secondly, in an enormous bell-rope, that, descending from roof to basement, communicated with an alarm-bell, and which, passing through almost every room in the house, could be pulled at night, if need should arise, by any one of their occupants. Upon the second [redacted] arrival, I had

been taken all over Castletower, and among other places, on to its flat roof, and nothing had given me so much pleasure as the sight of that giant bell, whose voice, I could well believe, was easily to be heard for miles, and would bring the inmates of the neighbouring police barrack to our aid in the time, too vague, but still brief, which is called both in England and its sister land 'a jiffey.' This barrack was, in my eyes, the one bright spot in the prospect (when there *was* a prospect, and it didn't rain), for I knew that it contained no less than twenty stout soldiers, loyal to the core, in addition to the ordinary police force, itself a most trustworthy and gallant body. The military had been stationed there but lately by the admirable prevision of the government (though not a day before they were wanted), and Lieutenant Moriarty, their commander, was a frequent guest at my host's table. He privately assured me, no matter at what hour he heard that bell, that he would be in Castletower in ten minutes, for although that was not possible as the crow flies, he would come upon the wings of love.

It was upon the broad expanse of the roof of Castletower that I took my principal exercise, upon pretence of the excellent view it afforded, but in reality because it seemed a good deal safer than going out of doors. There was a mountain called Galtymore (or some such name), about the size of Helvellyn, upon which I could distinctly see masses of Fenians drilling (especially on moonlit nights), and yet such was the infatuation of the family that they could see nothing but trees or patches of gorse. In addition to these external foes, *there was* treachery in the very heart of the garrison. *If the* butler was not a Fenian, I was prepared to give

up my reputation as a judge of character. He had only been a short time in Mr Dillon's service, and although he had had the most excellent testimonials from his last place, it is my belief, having seen him wait at table (and keep others waiting), that he was not a butler at all. Of course, dear Eleanor only laughed, and assured me that it was not the national practice to be sagacious at one's own calling, and that if Patrick and the coachman were to change places, there would not, on the one hand, be so many dishes broken, or, on the other, so many accidents with the carriage; but my suspicions of Patrick remained the same, and I kept my eye upon him, nevertheless, and my hand near the great bell-rope.

Nobody knows what I suffered at Castletower from nocturnal apprehensions of insurrection. I occupied, at my own request, a room on the top story, immediately under the belfry, and the first thing I did, upon retiring to it every night, was to open my window, and stepping out upon a stone balcony on which it gave, to look out for signal-fires. Her Majesty's government had no such vidette as I in all Tipperary. In vain dear Eleanor, as she left me after our nightly chats over my fire, besought me to forget my foolish fears.

'Forget them!' answered I, parodying with hysterical grief a favourite bard:

> 'Forget them!—if to dream by night,
> And think on them by day,
> If all the attention deep and close
> A coward's heart can pay—
> If *that* be to forget them, then indeed are they forgot!'

And no sooner had her thoughtless step quitted my room, than I was on duty. Twice I roused the house *with the most important* news from Galtymore; but

nothing came of it on either occasion, except that I grew more discredited than ever, and had the misery of reflecting that having cried 'Wolf!' so unnecessarily, my usefulness as a sentinel was much impaired. I so harried the garrison, indeed, with alarms and excursions—the latter to the chamber-door of the Rev. Theophilus, whom I always compelled to search the house in garments very unsuitable to the inclement weather then prevailing—that when my father wrote in answer to a statement of our position, and the terrors it caused me, that since I was such a little fool, I had better come home, I am afraid, I say, that my host, at all events, was not displeased. Nothing, however, could be kinder than his behaviour, and that of all his family: they professed to regret my departure, and a warm hope to see me in more quiet times, and above all, (bless them!) they did not strive to keep me in the Golden Valley against my will. The worst of it was, that I could not start that very day. The post, under escort though it was, was always much delayed, and we only got our letters at a time when, in more civilized communities, we send them away; one night of horror consequently still remained to be passed, and, as ill-fortune would have it, it was one of those said to have been fixed upon for 'the rising.'

Every one with nerves is aware how a peril magnifies itself when we seem to be upon the point—but on the wrong side of the point—of escaping it. It is during the last few strokes which the failing swimmer makes, and when close to shore, that he most fears to drown, and recognizes most clearly the great *probability* that he will do so; and thus when I retired to my room—but not to rest—upon the last evening

was to pass in Castletower, it seemed more likely than ever that morn would find it a blackened ruin, and its reckless inhabitants butchered, or, at the best, carried into the fastnesses of Galtymore against their will. When that dreadful Patrick handed me my cup of coffee after dinner, there had been an expression of fiendish glee upon his countenance, which seemed to say, 'You think you will escape the universal massacre, my confiding young friend, and so you would, if you had gone yesterday; but your plan has been laid just twenty-four hours too late. Ha, ha!'

If I could have got all the party to sit up that night, revolvers in hand, and with Patrick safe locked in the cellar, I should have felt comparatively comfortable; but I knew that such a proposition would be only received with ridicule. There would be a Fenian attack, I felt convinced, before morning, but there was nothing for it (since I had not fortitude) but resignation. Going to bed as usual was out of the question; so I lay down outside of it with my clothes on, and my bonnet and outdoor apparel on the chair by my side, ready (so far) for the emergency whenever it should take place. It was not my intention to go to sleep at all; but, in spite of all my efforts, my eyelids began to droop, and my senses to grow heavy, as I listened and listened, and yet heard nothing but the March wind moaning about the sleeping mansion in a discontented and Fenian sort of way.

Suddenly I was awakened from what must have been a sound sleep, by I know not what, but with the sense that there was somebody in my room. If it had been broad daylight, and I had seen the man there, knife in hand, I *could* not have been more convinced that

the Fenian butler was within a few yards of me, about to cut the rope that hung from the alarm-bell. It was easy to guess why he had come to *my* room of all rooms; it was, as I have mentioned, next the roof, and therefore the only apartment where all communication with the bell could be cut off from the house, except through a certain trap-door, of which this traitor (such was the credulous folly of his master) kept the key. Yes, he was standing upon a chair, in the centre of the floor—— A rattle and a fall, and I could hear the now useless rope sliding down, floor after floor, to the very bottom of the house. I listened, counting my own heart-beats, but no other noise succeeded. If any one had now been in the room, I should certainly have heard him breathe; but the wretch had evidently taken advantage of the whir and rustle of the rope to conceal his own departure. His stockinged feet had already fled down-stairs to open the front-door to his confederates without. He had doubtless drugged the whiskey-punch that evening, whereof the Rev. Theophilus and sons used to partake so regularly; and Eleanor and the female servants were, most likely, paralyzed with terror. At all events, no one seemed to be disturbed. In a few minutes, I should hear the stealthy unfastening of the great chain that secured the hall-door; and then the Fenians would rush in to the carnage. A sudden thought flashed upon me. There was the window, with its little balcony; could I not get out, and crouching beneath the wood-work, evade the observation of those who, bent on pillage and devastation, might enter my room? The fact of my *bed not* having been occupied, would favour the idea *that I* had escaped. I could not save dearest Eleanor

and the rest, although, if they had only listened to me (I could not help saying *that*, even at this awful moment), such treachery would have been made impossible —but perhaps I could save myself, and, the sole survivor of that doomed household, be able, at least, to supply the authorities with every information. I was out of the window in a moment, and had closed it softly behind me. My room had been almost pitch-dark, but here there was a little murky light now and then, as the flying clouds left bare the young moon. Down below upon the lawn, I could see masses of men crouching down, as though to elude observation: one man, evidently their leader, stood a little in front, as though scorning concealment; I could even see the green plume waving on his cap. With this trifling exception, all were motionless, and as quiet as that grave, which was yawning for their unsuspecting victims. Hush! was that the grating of the door-chain? No; it was only the chained mastiff-dog moving uneasily in his kennel, but, like his masters, doubtless rendered harmless by some soporific. A shadow, hitherto unobserved, though it crossed my very feet as I leaned over the low balustrade, here sent a thrill to my heart. Had some rebel gained the roof, and was he watching my movements from above, secretly smiling to himself at my poor device for concealment, and its impotency? No: it was only the shadow of the pent-house that covered the great bell. Directly I recognized its form, the embers of hope began to revive within me. What if I—poor *I*, whom these half-civilized though hospitable people had set down as an artificial and Cockney personage—should turn out to be the means of their preservation? If I could only climb

up yonder coping, I could gain the roof and—if the villain had but left me rope enough—set that vast tocsin ringing! Steep places always give me vertigo; I never cross a plank without feeling a morbid desire to meet the worst by jumping off it; but now, the necessity of the case, the imminence and immensity of the peril that threatened dearest Eleanor and her kindred, seemed to nerve me for a feat, which a Blondin or a Leotard might well have shrunk from—at least in petticoats and crinoline. There was no crowd below to applaud me—but rather the reverse; no rope to cling to, except that which was to be the reward of my efforts. But I knew that to hesitate was to be lost; it was—to compare great things with small—like taking a black draught. The more one looked at it, the less one was likely to like it.

Hand over hand, foot over foot, now on a leaden gutter, now on a stone gargoyle, I mounted slowly but surely. I was safe upon the broad flat roof. The mighty bell hung motionless and dumb before me. There was rope enough, and more than enough, for I could not bring what was still left up from the floor below, but it is not so easy to set a bell ringing of that giant size. With so insufficient a purchase, I confess I never thought of holding its tongue (to use an Hibernianism) and *so* making it speak, and for several minutes I effected nothing except to gently swing it to and fro; but presently, as the pendulous movement increased, it began to pour forth such tremendous sounds as it is impossible for one who has never been in a cathedral belfry on Christmas-eve to imagine. I knew *that* every note was precious as one from the Bank of *England*, and I pulled with the vigour of despair.

Looking towards the direction of the police-barracks, I saw lights gleaming from many a window, and doubtless, if I could have heard anything but that bell, the drums were already beating to arms. But in the mean time, the Fenians, goaded to frenzy by the knowledge that relief was at hand, had already burst into the house. No shots were fired: there was no necessity for that, since all opposition had been rendered powerless; but I pictured to myself my venerable host with his white hairs dabbled in gore, while his sons, so full of youth and strength a few hours before, presented, in vain, revolvers from which Patrick had drawn the charge. That arch-traitor himself, followed by a brutal band, would even now be rushing up the stairs to silence the honest bell and its faithful guardian. Yes, I heard the key turn in the little door close beside me, and another moment I was confronted by Patrick's fiendish face.

* * * * * *

When I came to myself, I was lying in my own bed, with Eleanor leaning over me, and her father standing by her side with a grave smile.

'Do you feel better now, my darling?' said she tenderly, as I opened my eyes.

'Yes, love, now I see that I have preserved you and your dear father,' answered I faintly. 'But the struggle yet continues; I hear them calling and fighting, still, below.'

'They are not fighting, my dear girl; they are only drinking,' rejoined the Rev. Theophilus cheerfully. 'It's the military and the police who are being entertained in as hospitable a manner as can be expected at four in the morning: that's all. You see you invited them rather early.'

'But in time, sir, I trust?' cried I, clasping my hands. 'Oh, tell me it was in time? Nobody is killed? The villain Patrick is in custody?'

'Well, my dear, he's in the cellar drawing corks. Where would you have him be?'

'Why, you surely have not forgiven him *that*,' exclaimed I, 'for cutting the—— Why, who has mended the bell-rope?'

'She is still off her head,' murmured my host. 'If the doctor don't come soon, I must bleed her myself. —My good girl,' added he tenderly, 'you have been dreaming, and in your nightmare, done a thing no woman would have ventured upon in her senses. You have got out of window, and climbed up to the roof of the house.'

'I know it,' said I; 'I did it to save your lives. Patrick cut the bell-rope, for I heard it fall.'

'Nay, you knocked down your bonnet and shawl from the chair, my girl, and *thought* it was the rope,' said the old gentleman. 'Your only real peril was the feat of which I have spoken.'

'My good sir,' said I, 'I saw the Fenians crouching on the lawn.'

'Yes, dressed in green: those were the laurels.'

'Nay, but I saw their leader with his waving plume.'

'Stuff and nonsense!'

'Dear papa,' said Eleanor; 'it was that prickly tree which the boys call the puzzle-monkey.'

The Rev. Theophilus sat down and roared with laughter.

'I am a poor man, my dear young friend,' said he, with tears in his eyes, and when he found breath to speak, 'but I would not have missed all this for fifty

pounds. You have roused the whole country-side; you have set all the telegraph wires in motion between this and London; nay, for all I know, they are flashing the news under the Atlantic that the Fenian insurrection is an accomplished fact. There is no woman in the world who is making so much noise as you, or, at least, who *was* half-an-hour ago. Gad, how you did pull that bell! There are twenty soldiers and ten policemen drinking your health downstairs. Lieutenant Moriarity arrived, as he declares he promised, upon the wings of love, and you should really come down and thank him for his punctuality and despatch.'

I never did so, however. I remained in my room the next morning, utterly ashamed of myself, until it was time for the carriage to take me away. I begged to see nobody but Eleanor and my kind old host. It is due to him to say, that although he shook with inward laughter throughout his farewell, he never alluded to what had happened. That detestable Patrick grinned from ear to ear, though he said not a word. But nothing can stop the mouths of the public, or those horrible newspapers. I heard nothing talked of all the way to Dublin except the night-attack upon Castletower. I saw nothing when I got there but enormous placards with *Great News!* and *The Rising in the Golden Valley!* and once, which caused me to pull my veil down, and sink back in the close car which was taking me to the steamer, *Heroic Conduct of a Young Lady against Fenians!*

CHARLEY'S BET.

'He shall never have a penny,' stormed Uncle Bunce; 'I will cut him off with a shilling.'

'My dear Bunce,' said I, 'you have already contradicted yourself, in first denying him a penny, and then promising him twelve. I never heard you contradict yourself (although often other people) except when in a passion, and that is not the frame of mind in which to sit down to alter your will.'

'Mind your own business, sir, and leave me to manage mine,' was the prompt and severe rejoinder.

'Your business *is* mine, Nicholas,' continued I quietly, 'since we are partners. We have been friends, boy and man, for these forty years, and I am not going to permit you to quarrel with me.'

'Who wants to quarrel?' said Uncle Bunce peevishly.

'Well, *I* don't; but I would rather even that should happen, than that my old friend should do himself such an injustice as to condemn a young fellow, who has no other relation in the world, unheard: your own sister's son, George! I am ashamed of you!'

'*Un*heard? Pack of nonsense,' sputtered the old fellow. 'The thing's as plain as the nose on your face.'

'Thank you,' said I. 'However, you may say as offensive things as you please about my nose, only, don't be unjust to Charley.'

'I am not unjust. The facts are these. I had adopted that boy, and meant to treat him as my own son. He has disgraced himself by betting on a public race-course a sum he had no honest means of paying if he lost—a gambler, sir, and a cheat, that's what he's proved himself; and I'll have nothing more to do with him.'

'You had better inquire into the matter a little further, Mr Bunce,' said I with some distinctness of manner; for I liked Charley upon his own account, as well as because he was the only relative of my friend and partner, one of the most sound-hearted and grossly prejudiced men within a mile of the Royal Exchange.

'There is nothing to be inquired about, Mr Coe. Even if my late nephew' [It was just like what his flatterers called his 'stern determination,' to use that phrase; just like his 'infernal obstinacy,' *I* say]—'yes, sir, even if my late nephew had had the fifty pounds to pay, which I am sure he had not, I would disinherit him for betting it; and even if he didn't bet, he was on the race-course, and that is a place no nephew of mine should show his face and remain my heir.—There is a letter from our Vienna correspondent, which requires your immediate attention, Mr Coe.' And with that, Uncle Bunce withdrew himself into the glass-case that is his peculiar sanctum at our office, and slammed the door behind him.

Our firm was Bunce and Coe, and there had been no other member of it, save us two, for five-and-twenty *years.* *We were* no relatives (though perhaps not less

fast friends upon that account), but I called him Uncle Bunce because Charley did, who, until that unlucky Derby-day, had been as great a favourite of his as of mine; and here were the young fellow's prospects blighted, and the old man's affections left without any human trellis-work to cling to, all because some ill-natured busy-body, who knew Nicholas Bunce's hatred of the turf, had told him that Charley Thornton had bet fifty pounds to ten against *Palmyra* for the Derby, on Epsom Downs.

I had no greater love for Racing, nor perhaps for Charley, than Nicholas had, but I could make a little more allowance for the follies of youth; and when I found myself crossed, or even disobeyed, all the milk of human kindness within me did not instantly turn sour, as it had done in Uncle Bunce's dairy, with the sad effect I have described. He had gone straight to Charley upon the information received, and said, 'Did you go down to Epsom Downs, sir, and bet fifty pounds to ten pounds against a race-horse? Answer me, "Yes," or "No."' And Charley—for the boy could not have told a lie if he had tried—had answered, 'Yes, Uncle;' and there the matter had ended.

So, now, being well convinced that Uncle Bunce was as inflexible as the iron in which we dealt in his resolve to make no further inquiry into the matter, I determined to make it myself for both their sakes. I was not very hopeful as to the result of the investigation, but still I thought there might be some mitigating circumstances—for the fact as it stood looked blacker, it seemed to me, than it ought to do, from what I *knew of* the young fellow. He was not the sort of lad *to leave* his duties (he was a clerk in a governm-

office) for a scene which he knew was especially distasteful to his uncle and guardian, and there risk upon a single event a sum that was equal to a third of his whole income. Uncle Bunce and I, it was true, perilled a great deal more than that proportion of *our* property in 'operations' in iron, but that was all in the way of business, and it was upon business-habits that the old gentleman prided himself, and for which he looked, first of all, in others. That Charley should have shirked his work at the Sword and Gun Office for a day's pleasure, was a sin of itself almost inexpiable in his uncle's eyes; but that he should have spent that day on a race-course, and there betted fifty pounds—the more I looked at the whole matter, in fact, the worse it appeared for my young friend and client, and the less did I wonder at the lines upon Uncle Bunce's forehead as he sat in his cucumber-frame—but by no means as cool as a cucumber—and snapped the clerks up so sharp that they trembled to approach his den.

When he left the office for the day, as he was accustomed to do an hour or so before me, his junior, I did venture to remark: 'Come, Bunce, you will at least not be in a hurry about this matter of poor Charley; perhaps I may have to tell you something about it to-morrow which may cause you to think differently of him.'

'You mean well, Coe, and I thank you,' said he gravely. 'But I shall see my lawyer to-night, and give him such instructions as will, at all events, prevent my property falling, after my decease, into the hands of the betting-ring.'

Stern I had often seen Nicholas Bunce, but bitter

never. I was glad to see him bitter, for it was proof that he had been wounded sore, and unless he had dearly loved the lad, Charley's conduct would not have had the power so to wound him. Now, where there has once been love, there is always room for reconciliation; and as soon as Uncle Bunce was round the corner, I took a hansom to the Sword and Gun Office.

It had been arranged long ago that on the next evening my partner and I should dine together at the former's house; and we did so. At one time, Charley had been asked, but that was all over now, of course. Uncle Bunce had not come to the City that day, and it was evident, by his wearied and melancholy manner, that he had been occupied in something distressing and disagreeable; indeed, I have no doubt that he had been remaking his will. I was not one whit afraid of the old gentleman, but I was resolved to put a good face upon the matter. 'Your good health, Nicholas,' said I, as he pushed the claret to me after dinner, 'and Charley's good health.'

Uncle Bunce started as if he had been stung.

'I do not wish to have that young man's name mentioned in my hearing,' observed he.

'After to-night, you shall not hear it, unless you please,' said I; 'but I must have my say for this once. I told you I should do so, yesterday, and I promised him the same, last night. Then I shall have discharged my conscience; and if you choose to let your nephew go to the dogs, it will be through no omission of mine. I have neither extenuation nor apology to make for him'——

'I should think not,' interpolated Uncle Bunce.

'Your thought is founded, however, upon wrong

premises, Nicholas. I have neither to make for him, simply because he needs none.'

'Needs none!' echoed the old man, and although his tone was meant to be contemptuous, I thought I detected in it an accent of hope.

'I mean what I assert, old friend,' replied I quietly. 'The lad has behaved, I will not say "as any other young man would have behaved in the like circumstances," for that phrase is often used to excuse an indiscretion, but I will say *this*, and then have done with it: He has behaved as a true gentleman, and (especially) as a good *man of business*, in the whole matter.' I held up the wine-glass between my eye and the light, and smacked my lips like one who, having relieved his mind, may now afford to enjoy himself.

Uncle Bunce seemed to gasp for air. 'What the deuce—why, you're making a fool of me,' exclaimed he savagely. 'Do you mean to tell me he did *not* go down to the Derby?'

'Of course he did. The Government sent him.'

'The—Government—sent—him?' repeated my respected partner like one in a dream.

'Just so,' said I. 'But don't let me trouble you with the particulars of a subject which I see is distasteful to you, and about which you have quite made up your mind. I have now performed my duty in the matter, and there's an end of it.—This is good wine. If it's no secret, may I ask what did you give for it, a dozen?'

'Fifty pounds. Fifty pounds to ten against *Palmyra*,' muttered the old man. Then: 'It's all a lie, Coe,' cried he suddenly. 'How dare you talk to me *about the Government* sending'——

'Mr Bunce,' interrupted I firmly, 'I will not endure such language. You may be as brutal and unjust as you please to your own flesh and blood, but you shall not bully me. I am not in the habit of telling lies. The fact is this (if you really wish to hear the fact, and not merely to flatter your own preconceived opinions), Charley Thornton could not have avoided—— But stop; first answer me one thing. If Messrs Bar and Bullion had offered you a holiday on the Derby-day, when you were a clerk in their office, upon the condition that you would go and see the race, would you have accepted it, or would you not?'

'Well, I *suppose* I should,' said Uncle Bunce reluctantly.

'No, you don't; you are *sure* you would; you'd have gone like a shot. Well, that being granted, you and your nephew are in the same boat. The Government gave a holiday on the Derby-day to the clerks in the Sword and Gun Office, upon the condition I have mentioned, and all those who availed themselves of the offer pledged their words to use the opportunity as it was intended to be used. If Charley, having obtained his day's leave, had not gone to Epsom Downs, he would have behaved unlike a gentleman. *That's* clear, I hope.'

'The Government ought to be ashamed of themselves!' observed Uncle Bunce.

'Very likely: but your nephew is not the Government, and although I hear from the chief of his department a most excellent account of the young fellow, it is not likely he ever will be. Thus, you see, to begin *with, so far* from shirking his duties to go to the Derby, Charley only obeyed orders—and I have no doubt with

great cheerfulness. This is certainly excellent wine.'

'Did the Government make him bet fifty pounds to ten pounds against *Palmyra?*' inquired the old gentleman grimly after a long silence.

'The Government didn't, but the Office did,' said I; 'in this way. There was a Derby sweep got up among the Sword and Gun clerks, as is always the case at every Government Office; and Charley put in his sovereign like the rest. Perhaps that was wrong of him: but if you never did worse, friend Nicholas, when you were a young man, all I can say is, you were too good to live, and I shouldn't fancy you were ever likely to die of *that* complaint.' I rose, and going to the window that looked out into the quiet street, threw it up, to let in the summer air. 'Come, come; you'll forgive his putting into the sweep,' said I. 'I don't ask you to be generous, but to be just.'

'I forgive him that, of course, but for the bet I will not forgive him. How is it possible that the Office could have had anything to do with his making a bet which, if he had lost, he could never pay?'

'He won it,' said I quietly; 'and it would have been a most unbusiness-like transaction if he had not laid the money. Yes, Mr Bunce; you have been wrong throughout this matter hitherto, and you are wrong now. I say, that Charley would have shown himself unworthy of being your relative if he had not laid the odds against *Palmyra:* and I'll prove it. The case was simply this: Charley drew *Palmyra* in this sovereign sweep, so that, if the mare had won, he would have received (since almost all the clerks subscribed to it) at least one hundred pounds. His obvious duty, then, as a man of business—and not a merely

gambling speculator—was to make some portion of the money safe. He therefore betted fifty pounds to ten pounds against the mare; if she had won, he would have cleared fifty pounds by the transaction; and, as it was, although she lost, the astute young fellow managed to secure ten pounds, minus the sovereign originally invested.'

'Ah, that was it, was it?' said Uncle Bunce, looking, I must say, most uncommonly foolish. 'However, you must confess that appearances were much against the lad.'

'Not a bit,' said I. 'On the contrary, they are very much in his favour. Come to the window here, and judge for yourself: there he is, at the corner yonder, waiting for me to whistle for him. Does *he* look like one of your cunning hang-dog Turfites—such as you have pictured him, or likely to grow into any such horrid shape? Unless he happens to draw a favourite in a sweep a second time—which is not very likely—I will answer for him that he will never make a bet in his life again. Come, sir, you whistle for him;' and Uncle Bunce did whistle, as cheerfully as any blackbird; and as the young fellow ran up, he held his hand out through the open window, to let him know at once that all was explained and forgiven. And then he came indoors, and something which I had caused to be privately kept hot for him down-stairs—for Uncle Bunce's cook loved the lad—was brought up by way of dinner, and Uncle Bunce and I, and Charley, had a merry evening together after all.

THE TOLL-BAR.*

Upon the road of real life, there was, at one time, no object so familiar as the turnpike, although it is an institution that is passing away from many districts, and in London (save at the bridges) has altogether disappeared. According (if we remember aright) to Mr Samuel Weller, a turnpike-man was, or should have been, a misanthrope, living in solitude, and taking delight on wet and snowy days, in seeing the passengers through his Bar disengage themselves from their warm wraps, and fumble in their pockets with numbed hands for the ticket or the money. Certainly, many toll-gates were placed in lonely spots enough, and apparently set as far from other human habitations as possible; and such a one was Alford Gate, on the Great North Road, and near the Border. It was near nothing else: placed in the centre of a bleak and treeless moor, and visible on both sides for miles to the occupant of the box-seat as the coach came spanking along with its four bays or grays; or to the postboys, as they spurred their horses to the gallop, for the occupants of the chaise behind them were often in a hurry in that locality, it being but a stage or two from Gretna Green. Except for

* *This story* and its two successors are records of incidents in real life.

such swift-passing company as these, the turnpike saw few visitors; and in winter-time, even on such a highway, the traffic dwindled to small proportions, and sometimes, when the snow was deep, even ceased for a day or two, so far as wheels were concerned, altogether. But still the horn would be heard sounding cheerily over the white waste of snow, and the guard of the mail, in his scarlet coat, would go *riding* by with the letter-bags as quickly as the 'balling' snow would permit him. The coach had been obliged to stop at the way-side inn on the other side of the moor; or perhaps, even less fortunate, was, with its three remaining horses, stuck fast upon the road.

In such seasons, Alford Gate would be lonesome indeed; and the two ancient women who kept it (for there was no man) found their position anything but agreeable. They had, it is true, a good store of provisions always laid up against such occasions, and plenty of money accrued to them at the same period, for they could not go to the country-town to lodge it in the bank. This last circumstance was a source of well-founded apprehension to them. Mrs Alison, the widow of the late toll-keeper, and who had, at his decease, succeeded to 'the trust,' and her sister, Ellen Bates, were both somewhat ancient dames, and, of course, could not have defended their little mansion against the attacks of even a single robber; while their nearest protector, Jacob Wright, the blacksmith, dwelt at least two miles away across the moor. Often and often had he and his wife, over a dish of tea at the toll-gate, sympathized with these good ladies, and done their best *to comfort* them after their several fashions: the wife, *by acknowledging* the reasonableness of their apprehen-

sion, and dwelling upon its special points of horror—the murder of both hostesses (for instance), that would probably precede the spoliation of their dwelling—the husband, by treating their fears as chimerical, and even demonstrating to them how all risk of loss might be avoided by intrusting what money they took in the house by day to the guard of the evening-mail for deposit at Wellborough, the nearest country-town.

On a certain afternoon in early winter, when Mr and Mrs Wright were thus partaking of the hospitality of the sisters, the conversation had especially run in this particular groove; the snow, although not deep, had already fallen in sufficient quantities to keep from travelling all who were not compelled to do so by necessity; and the two poor women felt that their lonesome season had set in, and were depressed in spirits accordingly. There was a good deal of money in the old tin case, which was their strong-box, for the cold and searching winds that had lately swept the moor had kept both the good ladies from going into Wellborough, and they now bewailed this accumulation of wealth—wealth, however, which was not their own, of course, but that of the Turnpike Trust—as likely to prove their destruction. Some ill-looking fellows had slouched by the gate that very morning, and one of them, under pretence of wanting a glass of water, had made his way into their little dwelling.

'Then, send on the money, as I have advised you fifty times before,' quoth honest Jacob, 'by the next coach, and then you will be easy in your mind.'

'Ay, ay,' said Mrs Alison in her quavering voice, 'that is all very well, if we could persuade wicked people that this had been done. But when robbers are [illegible]

pointed of booty, they are more bloodily inclined than at any other time.'

'And, of course,' observed Ellen Bates, 'we had much rather lose our money—and especially the Commissioners' money—than our lives.'

'Yes, indeed,' assented well-meaning Mrs Wright, 'though it is not even losing one's life which may be the worst of it; for did you not read in the newspaper only last winter that some men with masks broke into a lonely toll-house, just such as this might be, and put the poor toll-keeper on the fire, and held him there, because he would not tell them where the money was; and they did not believe what was the genuine truth, that it had been sent away for safety.'

'Gad a' mercy, Mrs Wright, you make my flesh creep,' shuddered Ellen Bates; 'and I do greatly wish—only I would never leave my sister here alone—that I was going home with you and your good husband to-night.'

'Come home with us both of you, by all means,' exclaimed the blacksmith, with a good-humoured laugh, 'and leave the toll-bar to take care of itself.'

'Nay, that would be a pretty thing indeed,' said the widow, gravely shaking her head: 'if we must be murdered, then we must—or at least *I* must, for Ellen of course is free to go if she chooses—but I will do my duty by my employers, let what will come of it.'

'You're an honest woman,' observed the blacksmith approvingly; 'and I hope you will never suffer for sticking to your duty.'

'Ah, she's a martyr to it, as I am always telling *her*,' remarked Ellen Bates. 'The times and times she gets up in the middle of the night to put that gate

open, and let folks pass; and perhaps only to take a ticket from the last gate: and then, after all, to be robbed by burglars—for that's what'll be the end of it all, I feel sure.'

'And I must say I've got a feeling of the same sort,' added Mrs Alison solemnly: 'I'm not a superstitious person, but that idea has struck me of late, so as I have turned icy cold with it a dozen times.'

'And yet you have been here a many years, ma'am,' said the blacksmith cheerily—'you and your poor husband as was—without being molested in any way, and far less put upon the fire yonder instead of the kettle.'

'Me and my husband has, but not me and Ellen,' answered the widow gloomily.—'Ah, Mrs Wright, that's the great blessing of a husband, believe me, and may you never come to want it: he's such a preservative against thieves. Oh, the many, many times as I've roused up my poor William, and sent him all about our little house here at night to look for 'em, which, thank Heaven, they never did come! But now—why, whenever we hears a noise—Ellen and me—we can only hide our heads under the blankets, and pray to Heaven that nothing may come of it. As for firing my poor dear William's pistol yonder, I could not do it, even if it was loaded, which it has not been ever since his death.'

'But I see your doors and windows are very well guarded,' said the blacksmith, still doing his best to reassure his hostess; 'and before any villain could make his way through so much wood and iron, there is no knowing what help may not come along the road.'

'*Ah, but it's* only our door and lower windows

are safe, Mr Wright,' broke in Ellen Bates; 'and any wretch has but to take the chicken-ladder from the yard, and set it up against our bed-room window, and he's in the house in two minutes.'

'To be sure the villain might do *that*,' said the blacksmith, in the tone of one convinced against his will.

'Well, I do pity you both,' observed Mrs Wright, in a tone of genuine commiseration.—'But it's getting near dusk, Jacob, and high time for you and me to be going.—And thanks, I am sure, to you, Mrs Alison, and to you, Miss Bates, for a most cheerful and pleasant afternoon.' For the two sisters were understood to bear the expenses of the household, and consequently of any occasion of hospitality, in equal shares.

When the bluff blacksmith and his kindly wife had taken their leave, the tenants of the little toll-house found themselves (as well they might) more dispirited and apprehensive than ever. Their fears, indeed, grew to such a pitch as to become the very presentiments which they had hitherto perhaps only imagined them to be.

'Something will surely happen to us this very night, Mary,' whispered Ellen, in melodramatic accents; and 'I shouldn't wonder if it did, Ellen,' was the widow's discouraging reply. In short, the two old ladies, who had as yet no experience, as unprotected females, of a toll-gate winter, were fairly panic-stricken.

It was not actually snowing; but the wind moaned with icy breath across the sheeted moor, and shook the fast-closed door and windows menacingly, as though it *was going* to make a tempestuous night of it; and each sister was privately thinking how, as the night

drew on, those gusts would seem as though human fingers were trying to unhinge the shutters, or unbar the door. It was quite a relief to them when, about six o'clock, they heard the cry of 'Gate,' and the sound of wheels, for they did not fear that robbers would come otherwise than on foot, and every honest face was welcome to them at such a time. What was their joy, then, to find in the present passer-by an old and trusted friend, Mark Palmer, a travelling pedler, but who in this season used a cart to carry his wares, which were of a somewhat costly nature. He threw a rug over his mare, and fastened her to the gate, while he got out to have a crack and a glass of spirits with the sisters. He was a short but resolute-looking fellow, of middle age, whose calling in those times exposed him to more danger than we have any idea of now-a-days; and he carried with him, for protection, an enormous mastiff, who remained in his cart on guard while he entered the house. He could not fail to remark the downcast appearance of the two women, who were eager enough to communicate to him the cause. 'Well, in my opinion,' observed he, when he had heard their woes, 'this alarm of yours is all moonshine. You're terrifying yourselves about nothing. Why, there's the coach at eleven; and the horse patrol at any time in the night; and you've strong doors and windows, as your friend the blacksmith has told you: while, I dare say, you have not one-tenth of the money's worth in your cash-box that I have in my cart yonder, and yet I have never been robbed yet—and don't intend to be.'

'We've more than forty pounds there,' said the widow, *pointing to* the cupboard, which contained this

treasure, as well as her little store of tea and marmalade, 'for it was Wellborough market the day before yesterday, when scores and scores ride through the Bar, and we've not been able to cross the moor since.'

'Forty pounds is a good deal of money,' said the pedler thoughtfully; 'and affords the greater temptation because it's all in coin.'

'That is so, indeed, Mr Palmer,' pleaded Ellen Bates, clasping her hands; 'and oh, if you would be so kind, just for this one night—for it's sure to happen to-night—to stay and protect us: we've got a stall for the mare; and we could give you a nice little supper, and make you quite comfortable down in the warm kitchen here.'

'It would be a great kindness if you would,' added the widow impressively; 'for, otherwise, I feel certain we shall come to harm.'

'Pooh, pooh, Mrs Alison, you will come to nothing of the kind. I am surprised at you—who are so used to toll-keeping—being so foolishly nervous. It is out of the question that I can stop here. But I tell you *what* I'll do. I have only to get to Wellborough to-night, and do not apprehend any mischief between here and there; so I'll leave you my dog Towzer, to keep guard. He's as good as any constable in the world; and to-morrow—when your unlucky night has passed—I'll call for him again. But when I'm gone, just hitch the toll-gate back, and don't open door or window again to-night, or the dog may run out, and be after me.'

The two sisters overwhelmed their friend with *thanks,* as he strode to the door and whistled to his *dog, who* at once sprang into the kitchen, which seemed

to shrink in its proportions at his presence—he was such a very large dog; half mastiff and half St Bernard; with shoulders as broad as those of a prize-fighter, and hanging jaw, and terrible teeth; and with a growl that was as assuring to its master, when danger threatened, as it was depressing to his antagonist.

'There he is, ladies,' said the pedler, introducing this formidable animal to their notice; 'a dog as has not his equal in the north for courage, and who, when he lays hold of an enemy, has never yet been known to let go, except at his master's voice.—Have you, Towzer?'

Whereupon Towzer brought up from his capacious chest some canine monosyllable, that seemed to sound like 'no,' and which echoed gloomily through the little house, and died away upon the moor outside.

It was likely enough that the mastiff might be all that his master had said of him, yet his presence failed to inspire the two women with confidence, when the rumbling of the friendly wheels upon the hard road had ceased, and they were once more left without human companionship. The wind rose higher and higher, and whirled the frozen snow against the panes, as though pebbles were being thrown at them: and now it shook the doors and shutters as though it were indeed about to burst in, in visible shape, while the lesser gusts sounded like dreadful whisperings of felonious men, who made their plans in concert before attack. When the night-mail went by at a hand gallop—a mere passing vision of winged steeds and wrapped-up figures—matters became still worse, for the tenants of the little toll-house felt that no well-disposed human creature could now be expected until morning. They retired to their bed-room on the upper floor, taking the dog

with them; but they did not undress—for it seemed to their unbalanced minds a matter of certainty that the night would not pass by without some catastrophe. They lay down together on the bed and listened, while the mastiff couched upon the floor, his huge jowl half-hidden in his paws, and wholly undisturbed by the elemental strife without. Once only, when a pane of glass—which, however, they knew had been previously loosened—fell with a crash on the kitchen-floor below, he raised his monstrous head and muttered thunder. Two candles were kept burning, and well lit up the little room. It was about one o'clock that a short lull took place in the tempest, and Mrs Alison distinctly heard the sound of footsteps in the back-yard. Her sister, who had fallen asleep for a few moments, in spite of herself, had not heard the noise, and as usual in such cases, affirmed she had been broad awake, and must have been conscious of the incident, had it occurred. The widow did not waste words in argument, but whispered, in trembling accents, 'Look at the dog.' It was evident enough that Towzer had heard something which required an explanation, for he opened his great eyes, and lifted his ears, although remaining otherwise unmoved. 'They have gone to get the chicken-ladder,' continued the widow in tones of calm despair: 'that is what I always said they would do.' And indeed, in a few minutes, there was a dull thud against the window-sill without, such as would be produced by placing the ends of a ladder upon it. It was not a dark night when the swift-flying clouds permitted, as now, the moon to show herself; yet neither of the women dared look through the pane. They kept their eyes fixed on the dog, in whom their wife [illegible]

now rested. The appearance of that magnificent creature was indeed (if they had been in a condition to appreciate it artistically) almost sublime. He had risen in an instant, but without sound, and placed himself close under the threatened spot—the window; every hair in his body appeared alive with excitement; his eyes grew bloodshot, and wore an expression of concentrated fury; but his teeth remained, as yet, in their sheaths, except their white points, which showed under the wrinkled upper lip.

The heavy shuffling step of some man upon the rounds of the ladder could now be heard — the fall of the knee as well as that of the foot, because the ladder was boarded—and then a hand was placed upon the fragile fastening of the casement.

Then, for the first time, the dog gave audible token of his presence: a hoarse and terrible menace broke from his now open jaws. It was not a growl, and still less like a bark. The man without evidently heard it, for the noise at the window ceased, but he did not seem to recognize it as the thing it was.

'He is sure to have pistols, and will shoot the dog,' whispered Ellen Bates through chattering teeth. She was a lady who always 'speculated for the Fall.'

The widow did not speak, and perhaps could not. She fancied she could hear the very breathing of the man without. After a short pause, the window was slowly lifted to its full height, and a man, whose features were concealed by a piece of black crape, pushed his head and shoulders into the room. The next moment, he uttered a shrill cry of terror, as the huge mastiff sprang at his throat, before he could put up his hands to save it, and bore him headlong to the

floor. To see him battling with so terrible a foe, at such a disadvantage, his body half without and half within the room, would, under any other circumstances, have aroused the good women's compassion, but horror and alarm so wholly possessed them that they had no room for pity. They fled from the room, and out of the house, passing close beside the ladder, on the top of which so frightful a combat was proceeding, and dashed across the moor towards the blacksmith's house. The horrid growlings of the dog and the shrieks of the man which filled their ears before they could undo the fastenings of the door, seemed to pursue them across the Waste.

Bareheaded and uncloaked as they were, they heeded not the bitter wind, nor were they conscious of fatigue, nor did they spend the precious breath in speech, but pushed on at their utmost speed. To their great joy, as they drew near the cottage, they beheld a light at the upper window, and congratulated themselves that they would be let in at once, and find shelter and protection from that friendly household. They beat frantically at the door; and presently a quavering voice, through the keyhole, demanded who they were, and what was wanted. They hardly recognized the voice of the blacksmith's wife, and she, on her part, had never heard the accents of her friends so shrill and piteous. The fact was that her good man was out, and she was almost as frightened at such an unseasonable visit as they were themselves. Then the widow and her sister remembered for the first time how honest Jacob had told them in the afternoon that *he* should have business in Wellborough that evening; *but neither* they nor Mrs Wright had had any idea

that it would delay him so late, and the fact now seemed deplorable enough to all of them. 'They've beguiled him to drink at the public-house,' cried Mrs Wright in injured tones, 'until he thought he might just as well stay where he was till morning; and it ain't the first time, nor yet the second, Mrs Alison. And I am right glad of this—that what has happened to-night (for the fugitives had told their tale) will be a lesson to him not to leave me lonesome here again as long as he lives.' To this sanguine view of man's reformation, it is probable that, under less thrilling circumstances, the experienced widow might have taken exception; but she could think and speak of nothing now save that which she had so lately 'gone through,' and the horrible scene that was perhaps even still being enacted at the toll-house.

'Nay, but if the dog be anything of a mastiff,' reasoned Mrs Wright, whose father had chanced to be connected with the canine 'fancy,' and who therefore was an authority in the matter, 'he has either killed the man by this time, or the man has killed him, and made off with the toll-money. Unless he shot him, bless you, or could have got at him to cut his throat, you may depend on't he's a dead man.'

'Dearey me, I wonder how it has turned out!' ejaculated Ellen Bates.

'I wonder too!' echoed the widow. 'If, as you say, there can now be no danger, Mrs Wright'——

'Lord a' mercy! you ain't thinking of going back again?' interrupted Ellen.

'I will go, if Mrs Wright will go,' answered the widow resolutely; 'that is, when the daylight comes.'

And rather than be left alone, Ellen Bates agreed to accompany the other two.

Accordingly, at the first gray streaks of dawn, the three women, though with beating hearts, crossed the moor to the toll-house, against the upper window of which the ladder was still reared. With fearful steps, they ventured into the kitchen, where all things seemed undisturbed, and were about to go up-stairs, concluding that both dog and man had fled, when Ellen Bates pointed to the ceiling, on the white surface of which appeared a huge red stain, which had evidently soaked through from the floor above. At the same moment, a noise from the same direction seemed to freeze their blood. It was the sound of some heavy body being dragged over the boards, accompanied by a low and savage growling.

'The dog has killed the wretched man, and is worrying the body,' said Mrs Wright in a hoarse whisper: 'it is just what they do with vermin.'

'This is too horrible!' ejaculated the widow, with her foot on the stairs. 'The mastiff will not hurt me, and, at all events, I will do my best to stop it.'

It was in vain that the others tried to dissuade her. She overcame her terrors sufficiently to enable her to reach the open chamber-door, where a frightful spectacle presented itself. The burglar, a large and powerfully-built man, was on the floor, quite dead; while the mastiff, with his teeth still fast in the throat of his foe, and growling savagely, was dragging the mangled corpse hither and thither over the floor. The body of the dog was interposed between his victim, so that his *face, from* which the black crape had been torn, was *at first* invisible, but the next movement of the ani[illegible]

revealed it. As it did so, a terrible shriek burst from the lips of Mrs Wright, who had followed close upon the widow's footsteps, and she fell heavily upon the floor in a swoon; for the would-be thief that lay dead before her was no other than her own husband, the Blacksmith!

MR JOHN STOTT'S DIFFICULTY.

LESS than forty years ago, in a certain west-country town of England, lived Mr John Stott, head of the constabulary, so astute a thief-catcher, that his friends thought it a pity he should throw his wits away upon provincial vagabonds, and not give them broad and noble scope as a Bow Street runner. His enemies, the local scoundrels, thought the same; but contented themselves with observing darkly that 'he was so sharp that he would one day probably cut himself,' or that 'he was too clever to live.' In spite of these intellectual advantages, or in consequence of them, Mr Stott was as vain as a peacock, and made the not uncommon mistake of imagining himself even a cleverer fellow than he really was. He kept the little town (for it was a little one then) so clear of evil-doers, and got so complimented thereupon by the bench of magistrates, that he could not conceive that any misdemeanour could be committed which his sagacity should be unable to ferret out, or should fail to bring it home to the true culprit. 'I don't pretend for to say,' was one of his favourite remarks, 'as I was *never* puzzled in my profession, but *this I will* say, as no man ever took me in *twice*;' *and then* he would resume his pipe with the air of a

man who has modestly confessed to a weakness, which no other person would have dreamed of attributing to him. Even his wife believed in Mr John Stott, and so doubtless would his *valet de chambre*, if he had happened to have kept one.

'Burglary at Sir Robert Air's last night,' said he sententiously, as he sat smoking after supper in his snug little parlour, one summer evening, while his wife mixed his gin-punch after his own particular receipt.

'You have got the wretches, of course,' observed Mrs Stott, paring the lemon-peel so that you could see through it, 'or else it would not be my John.'

'Well, no,' returned the great man, rightly appropriating the last observation as a compliment rather than an expression of doubt as to his personal identity. 'The fact is, it's very queer; but I have *not* got the wretches. I shall have them to-morrow, but at present they are absolutely at large.'

'Lor, John! I can scarcely believe you when you tell me. Why, how on earth could they have got away from you? They could not have been ordinary burglars.'

'You are right, ma'am,' returned the chief-constable, with a gratified look; 'you have hit the nail exactly on the head. They were not ordinary men: they were acrobats.'

'Acrobats!' answered Mrs Stott softly; 'dear me!'

She had no very accurate idea what 'acrobats' were; they might be a religious sect, or they might be a savage tribe, or possibly even both. But she had long passed for a woman of sense and sagacity, through maintaining a discreet silence, except when her husband's talents seemed to demand her eulogies, and she

was not going to risk that reputation now. She had a full share of the curiosity of her sex, but she had more than their ordinary patience. She waited to be informed upon the subject in question, without hazarding the remark which occurred to her, that acrobats had white hair and pink eyes, and therefore could at least be easily recognized by the constabulary; and she had not to wait long.

'Yes, it must have been them Tumblers,' mused Mr Stott, sipping his punch out of the teaspoon; 'and less than three and the boy could never have done it. It was her Ladyship's dressing-room window, as looks out on the back, as they broke in at, and no ladder could have been put there because of the flower-stand. It must have been that little devil in the tights and spangles at top of the three others. I have measured the height from the ground, and it just tallies. That's what comes of allowing them itinerants to be in the place at all. The idea of the mayor letting them have the Town-hall to show their tricks in! I'd put a stop to everything of that sort, if I had my way: and I will do it too, in future.'

'But you will not interfere with Mr Shaw, John, I do hope, since he has been so pleasant and civil.'

'No, ma'am, no. Mr Shaw is a man of science, in his line, and what is more, a man of substance. Mr Shaw's exhibition is itinerant, it is true, but that is from the necessity of the case. His collection of wild animals is interesting in a high degree, as the rector was observing to me only yesterday. But them acrobats is quite another matter. However, lissom as *they* are, they must run a little faster, and climb a little

higher, I can promise them, before they can get out of the reach of John Stott.'

'They stood upon one another's shoulders, and the boy clambered up them, I suppose?'

'Yes, ma'am, that was their ingenious method; and if they had had to do with a common mind—though I say it who should not say it—the manner in which the thing was done would have remained a mystery. If a ladder had been used, it must needs have made some mark upon the mignonette-box. My men were all agape when I stated that circumstance, and began looking up in the air, as though some bird had done it. But, of course, when I said "Them Tumblers!" they saw everything clear enough. Sir Robert, who assisted our investigations in person, was so good as to say that I reminded him of Christopher Columbus and his egg.'

'You don't say so!' said Mrs Stott admiringly, and wondering within herself what that story was, and whether Mr Christopher Columbus could possibly have been an oviparous animal. 'And did her Ladyship lose much?'

'Some rings and pins, and three or four pounds in gold. Curiously enough, there was a bundle of bank-notes upon the dressing-table which entirely escaped the young rogue's attention, or her loss would have been much more serious.'

'And yet, he was such a frank-faced, honest-looking little fellow, that I never should have thought harm of him,' said good-natured Mrs Stott; 'but of course you're right.'

'Well, most probably,' observed her lord and master

with a short dry chuckle. 'By ten o'clock to-morrow morning, when the justices meet, we shall have this honest-looking young gentleman and his friends in the Town-hall, taking part in a public performance of another kind than that with which they favoured the town last week. And then we shall see what we *shall* see.'

Mr Stott arose, took his official hat down from its peg, and prepared to go his rounds, a nightly precaution he seldom omitted, notwithstanding the absence of all native criminals from his strictly preserved territory; as for the acrobats, they had fled with the first dawn of morning, and were not likely to return till they were brought back; but he had despatched two of his small 'force' in pursuit of them, and hence there was the more need for his personal vigilance.

'I shall be back at two, as usual, my dear, if not before,' said Mr John Stott.

About two A.M., from long habit, the wife of the chief constable was accustomed to awake, and presently to hear her husband's heavy footfall coming up the stairs; but upon the present occasion there was no such welcome sound. She sat up in bed with her nightcap tucked behind her ears, and listened attentively, but in vain, for him. Notwithstanding his precarious calling, Mr Stott was a model of punctuality, and as time (which in her opinion was almost the only thing that could do it) went on without him, she began to be seriously alarmed lest this admirable man, whom human ingenuity had never yet baffled, had been overwhelmed by envious fate. There had been thunder in the air that night, and a bolt might have struck him. But at daylight she heard the front-door [redacted]

and a slow tread come up the stairs. The wife of a chief-constable should be above the suspicion of trepidation, but it was so unlike his ordinary step, that it made her heart go pitapat. However, it *was* her husband, whose noble spirit something had evidently cast down. Instead of kicking his boots across the room as usual, he drew them off, and then sat in his stockings, thinking.

'John,' said she, in much confusion and alarm; 'what *is* the matter, my dear? Have you not caught them albatrosses?—I mean albinos.'

'Yes, ma'am, *they*'re safe enough. But the deuce of it is that—in their absence—there has been another burglary. Mrs Colonel Peewit's house has been broken into just in the same way—through the second-floor back window. It's nothing less than magic, for *that* had a mignonette-box, and there is no mark of a ladder to be found there neither. I've had my bull's-eye over every square inch of it.'

'Lor, John!'

'There was nobody in the room,' went on the chief-constable musing, 'and the window was open, so that the thing might have been done easy enough, when he had once got there. But how he ever *did* get there —that's the question—unless the devil had wings.'

'But the devil *has* wings!' was Mrs Stott's involuntary exclamation; the good lady was so flustered by her late anxiety, that for once she spoke in a hurry.

'You will presently cause me to imagine that I have made a *second* mistake in my life, ma'am—in the having married a fool,' was her husband's stern rejoinder. Then he went on soliloquizing. 'The thief, whoever he was, took the same things—rings and [illegible] like; but he also took a plated inkstand.

That looks as if he did not know his trade. And yet, to have effected an entrance just where nobody would have thought such a thing practicable, he must have been most uncommon cunning. Cunning? No, for then I should see the thing as plain as the church tower. It's downright unaccountable. How is it humanly possible that things can be stole out of a second-floor window without a ladder, or anything to climb up by, unless it's a water-spout—*that's* what I want to know. And what's more, even if he got up, how did he ever get down again?'

Hearing these remarks put aloud, and in an interrogative form, Mrs Stott thought it incumbent upon her to speak, and the more so, as she had ingeniously elaborated a theory of her own to account for the whole mystery.

'If nobody could have got in from the outside, John, people as was inside could have done it easy enough. It was one of them trapesing servant-girls, who dresses so fine, and is always wanting money to buy gewgaws, you may take my word for it.'

'I don't suppose, ma'am,' returned the chief-constable with supreme contempt, 'that the Bench of Justices would "take your word for it," even if *I* was weak enough to do so—which I am not. The servants are all above suspicion, both at Sir Robert's and Mrs Peewit's—that was the first thing as we looked to of course. But even if it were otherwise, do you suppose that thieving is an epidemic, that it should break out in one household to-day, and in another to-morrow, as this has done. You had better go to sleep, ma'am, and *leave* me to think the matter out alone.' Which, accordingly, this great man, having drawn his night-

cap on, the better to consider in, proceeded to do. 'Two burglaries on two following nights, in a town under his personal superintendence, and nobody yet in custody! He had never imagined that such a blot could befall his 'scutcheon! It was not impossible, in a town so slenderly guarded, that a ladder might have been employed without detection, but, most certainly, in neither of these cases had such an instrument been used. The flower-boxes had, in both instances, projected beyond the sill, so that the top of any ladder must have rested on them, and left its mark. There was also no trace of the foot of it in the soil below—or sign of an attempt to remove such trace—although, in the case of Sir Robert's house, there was a flower-bed immediately beneath the window.' Mr Stott, in short, brought all his intelligence to bear upon this problem in vain, and nothing came of it but headache.

Next day, the whole town was in a state of intense alarm. The previous robbery had created much excitement among the inhabitants, but not so much on account of the crime as of the sagacious manner in which their chief-constable had discovered the mode of depredation; but now, not only had a second outrage been committed, but the fact of its occurrence while the acrobats were away had proved their innocence of this particular offence (though the magistrates, not knowing how else to account for their seizure, committed them for a month, as rogues and vagabonds), and negatived Mr John Stott's solution of the riddle altogether. The chairman of the Bench, who had been accustomed to suck that official's brains before addressing his audience in the Town-hall, had nothing to say upon the subject except to recommend people to shut their second-floor

windows, which, since it was very warm weather, and most of them cultivated flower-boxes, did not give general satisfaction.

The next night, the mayor's own house was robbed in a precisely similar manner.

It was on a Friday, and the local papers which came out the next day, published second and third editions, to describe the details. Besides the burglary, a sort of sacrilege had been committed. The thief had actually possessed himself of the Municipal Mace. This beautiful object, although not intrinsically valuable, had apparently excited his greed, for he had dragged it out of its case as far as the window, and thence let it fall with a report that had alarmed the house, and dinted the ground below. When the door was opened, however (which the servants declined to do, until the 'proper authorities' arrived), the marauder had vanished, and with him this Emblem of Authority, as well as a pair of his Lordship's boot-hooks. There happened to be nothing kept in that room but the mayor's boots and the town mace. But the incident was, of course, as distressing to Mr John Stott as though the regalia had been plundered. He felt that his great reputation was giving way under these repeated shocks; while the rest of the constabulary were of course overwhelmed with disgrace; and the Tory newspaper openly advocated 'stringent measures' and the calling out of the Yeomanry.

'I suppose,' sighed his wife, upon this Saturday afternoon, 'there is no chance of your going with me to-night to the Show? And yet it seems such a pity, *after* that civil Mr Shaw has sent us these tickets: and *you know* I never enjoy anything—let it be wild

beastesses, or what not — without you, John. How fine they look, with this picture of the lion and the unicorn—though the bill says as the unicorn is dead—with *Shaw's Show*, "patronized by all the crowned heads of Europe," and "admit the bearer," with his autograph in the corner, in red ink! Why, the mayor's own invitations are not more splendid.'

'Don't talk of the mayor, woman, for that makes me think of the mace,' replied her husband with a shiver. 'I don't wish to see any show but one, and that's the man that stole that mace with a pair of handcuffs on him, or what would be better still, a-standing underneath a bit of wood, with a rope round his neck, and a parson by his side. But there; it's no good wishing. Upon my life, I sometimes wonder if the devil himself is not a-doing on it all, to vex me.'

'Lor, John, you make me creep!'

'Well, I can't make you *fly*, I reckon,' replied Mr Stott surlily; 'and yet that's what this fellow can do, confound him! He's like a bird of the air—a bird of prey.'

'Well, John, do you know I can't help sometimes thinking—only I would not have mentioned it unless *you* had—that, perhaps, after all, it *is* a bird! You know a magpie is a thief by nature.'

'And so you suppose a magpie could have stolen the town mace, do you? Why, you are a greater fool than the newspapers.'

'I forgot the mace, John,' observed Mrs Stott humbly.

'I wish I could forget it,' growled the chief-constable. 'You had better put on your bonnet, and take *my ticket* round the corner to Mrs Jones, who will

be glad enough to go with you; only take care Shaw don't keep you both, and put you in a cage for a pair of owls. There, I'm sorry to be so rude, Mrs Stott; but the fact is I feel as I shall go out of my mind unless I tackle this mystery; and I must be left alone to think it out.'

So Mrs Stott, obedient wife as she was, attired herself in gorgeous apparel, and accompanied by her friend and neighbour, the parish doctor's wife, honoured Mr Shaw's menagerie with her presence. It was a sort of fête which that practical student of Natural History (which included some knowledge of mankind) had given to the inhabitants of the town, and everything was on a very splendid scale. The show was lit up by rows of chandeliers, made of circlets of wood and candles, from the latter of which, as they of necessity hung very low, the tallow dripped upon the heads of the company; but that was not found out till the next morning. The floor and cages had been thoroughly swept and garnished, and some attempt had even been made, by means of unguents and spices (or, in other words, chlorate of lime), to mitigate the odour that hangs about all establishments devoted to the reception of wild beasts. But it must be confessed that this last refinement was a failure—it was like the jar of *ottar*, which, 'do what you will, the scent of the roses would cling to it still;' only in this case the perfume was the result of a combination; the hyena and the musk-rat, the royal Bengal tiger and the marmoset, each contributed their *soupçon*. In place of the usual showman, Mr Shaw himself, with an elegant white wand, pointed *out the* various objects of interest, explained their *habits*, and narrated anecdotes of their extraordinary

sagacity. The monkey-cages, as usual, were the chief attraction; their innocent gambols, and the remarkable *penchant* they exhibited for biting each other's tails, were the admiration of the beholders. Mrs Stott, while regarding these parodies upon mankind with a contemplative air, was very nearly—indeed literally within half an inch or so—paying a great penalty for her philosophic abstraction. A ribbed-face baboon of gigantic size, looking not unlike one of Mr Cooper's Indian heroes in his war-paint, made a snatch at her fingers, which, loaded with rings, happened to be ungloved, for she had just been taking refreshments.

'Your charms even vanquish the brute creation, Mrs Stott,' observed the clerk to the magistrates gallantly; 'the enamoured animal seeks your hand.'

'Yes; but, like the rest of the male sex, for what is in it, or on it,' replied Mrs Jones, who had been an heiress in a small way, till her husband removed from her that invidious distinction by spending all her money.

The ribbed-face baboon screamed with disappointment, and swung by his rope head-foremost, and with his eyes shut, for the rest of the evening.

It was 1 A.M., and the chief-constable's wife had been in bed since midnight, but she had not yet fallen asleep. She was awaiting the arrival of Mr Stott, in hopes that he might have some good news to tell her, or to comfort him with her sympathy in case he hadn't. It was a beautiful night, and she had left the window open, through which the soft fresh air came gratefully enough after the atmosphere of the menagerie. She would be able to catch the majestic footfall [illegible] while it was yet a great way [illegible]

for it. Presently, through the deep summer stillness, sounded a human step, which, albeit not that she was expecting, seemed familiar to her. It was a step which, although it moved with quickness, had a slight limp, such as she had noticed in the gait of Mr Shaw. Yet he had himself assured her that very evening that he was a man of early habits, and always shut up his house on wheels before twelve o'clock. It was most unlikely that on the night of his fête, of all nights, he should have made an exception to this salutary practice; and yet she knew no other step than his like that step. It stopped beneath the window, and then there was a sliding, scrambling noise, as though something were struggling up the water-pipe that ran down the side of the house, and she felt at once that the mystery of these nightly thefts was about to be solved.

She was frightened, of course; but she did not shut her eyes and put her head under the bed-clothes, as most ladies would have done under such circumstances; on the contrary, she stared so hard at the window, that the sides seemed to meet and leave no window at all. Or was it that the space had become obscured by the presence of the marauder? Yes, that was it: and what a marauder!

The face of the intruder she could not catch; but she saw that he was quite black, very inadequately attired, and provided with a long tail. That late imprudent reply of hers to her husband, 'But the devil *has* wings,' came into her mind with terrible emphasis. No wonder that even the chief-constable's vigilance had failed to——

Ah, that face! There was no mistaking those very *strikingly* marked features! It was, without doubt, [redacted]

late admirer, the ribbed-face baboon; and whether from motives of delicacy or fear, Mrs Stott did dive under the bed-clothes then, with only her nose left out to breathe through, like the elephant when under water, as Mr Shaw had instructively informed her not three hours ago.

She could hear a little, however, as well as breathe; and she distinctly caught the quiet chuckle of her visitor, and the chink of her rings as he swept them off the dressing-table with his hairy paws. Presently, there was a shrill whistle from below, and the chuckling ceased; and then came the sliding scrambling noise again. The ribbed-face baboon had put the rings in his mouth—having no pocket—and slid down the water-spout to his master with the spoil.

'John,' cried Mrs Stott, when the chief-constable put in his long-wished-for appearance, and as soon as he had got inside the door, 'I've found it all out.'

'Pshaw!' said her husband contemptuously.

'Lor,' cried she, 'well, you *are* a wonder! How ever did *you* find out it was Mr Shaw and his ribbed-face baboon?'

'Never you mind, ma'am,' rejoined Mr Stott with his old confident air; 'I *have* found it out. And now let me hear how far your testimony goes in corroboration of my views.'

The next day, 'from information received,' as he darkly hinted, the chief-constable apprehended the keeper of the menagerie, and searched his house on wheels with such effect that all the stolen property was recovered. Mr Shaw, it appeared, had trained the ribbed-face baboon to climb up water-spouts and sweep [illegible] all articles that [illegible]

accounted for his taking the plated inkstand and the municipal mace. If his education had been suffered to progress, he would doubtless in time have been taught to carry off bank-notes and railway dividends. But, thanks to Mrs Stott, his occupation was henceforth gone. The chief-constable, however, got all the credit for the discovery, and was held by everybody, including his wife, in higher estimation for sagacity than ever. It was true that he had been at fault at first, and in more than one instance; but then, as he himself observed, 'I may still say as no man ever took me in twice—for this was not a Man, but a Hape.' *

* The above curious incident happened at Shrewsbury in 1834, and was without doubt the circumstance on which Edgar Poe founded his famous story of *The Murder in the Rue Morgue.*

HUNTING EXTRAORDINARY.

It was my misfortune in early life to have to go a-hunting three days a week. My father kept a pack of harriers (or, as the *Times* alone correctly spells it, hariers), and I was bound in filial duty to perform this penance. I had a pony of my own, called *Lightfoot*, and it was only proper that I should make use of him. My brothers were all sportsmen—or sportsboys—and even my mother was famous as a horsewoman, and especially gifted with an eye for seeing hares sitting. Forty hares might have sat under *Lightfoot's* nose; and their cunningly contrived 'forms,' with that sloping roof of grass above them, would have hidden them all from me; but my maternal parent never missed one. Often and often would her uplifted hand call the attention of her degenerate son, and at a nod from her I would gallop off to the huntsman, and tell him *I* knew where poor puss was in hiding. But I never was able to deceive that man.

'You mean your mamma knows, Master Jemmy,' he used to say; and then he would chuckle in the brutal manner so characteristic of his profession, and with a 'Come up, will you!' addressed to his old roan, lead the dogs to their victim. I see him now 'wooing' away

on that battered horn of his, while his horse's hoofs cast up the wet soil of the turnip-field behind him, and very often into my eye.

It is impossible that *every* boy can take delight in hunting, and be so devoted to horses and dogs as they pretend to be. Of course, many are honest enough in this predilection; but because it is un-English not to like such things, a good many of them fall into another un-English habit, and tell lies about the matter. I was a sharp boy, but I can't believe I was the only sensible one that ever was. As we grow up, there are many amusements about which everybody is more or less of a hypocrite. It is permitted to profess an attachment beyond what is actually felt for the legitimate drama, for 'a little music after dinner,' for the sermons of a popular preacher, and for truffles: but in early life, hypocrisy is surely to be deprecated. Why, then, is the youth of this country compelled by public opinion to affect an interest in horses and dogs, which may not be felt, and in some cases may be even repugnant? For my part, I greatly preferred cats. At nine years of age I was a student, so far as exciting works of fiction were concerned, and I found relaxation in teaching the nursemaid cribbage.

Why, at least in so unimportant a matter as recreation, should not everybody be permitted to follow his own line? It was surely hard that, on account of my simple and inexpensive tastes, I was stigmatized in the family circle as Molly. It was a marvel that this inconsiderate treatment, combined with the private opinion which I could not help entertaining of my *friends* and neighbours and their tastes, did not make *me* a cynic.

Imagine a dark day in late November, half-fog, half-mizzle, and evidently designed for the perusal of the *Last of the Mohicans* over the school-room fire, or a quiet little rubber with pretty Susan, while the younger children took their peaceful morning's sleep around us—imagine, I say, on a day like that, having to mount *Lightfoot*, and trot through the damp woods or over the wet turnips in search of a poor animal, whom Nature (and, I may add, good sense), had taught to lie snug and warm at home in her form. She was not easy to find, even by my accomplished mother, and our situation in the mean time was melancholy in the extreme. All soon felt cold and dreary, and I, for my part, having a rapid digestion, was very quickly hungry. I used to take an immense piece of cake with me, so large that it seemed (at first) that I could never get through it, and some of it I would share with the young puppies. But this was objected to. In spite of their pretended fondness for dogs, I never saw one of my people give them a crumb, and they even found fault with me for my humanity. I kept it to myself, of course, for the dogs' as well as my own sake; but there were one or two of the younger hounds who always preferred hanging about in my neighbourhood to poking among the wet turnip leaves after a creature that was invariably caught, if it was caught at all, by their seniors. When I say 'invariably,' there was one exception. *Grudgeon*—a wise dog, who would have been a turnspit, if he had had his choice—and I were once in a solitary spot together, and found a hare all by ourselves. I forget the technical term of reproach for his conduct, but *Grudgeon* snapped her up in her form, and *ate* her, body and bones and fur and all. It

is my belief that all those dogs were half-starved, but I must confess that *Grudgeon* had acquired his name from an exceptionally healthy appetite.

When the toad has swallowed the duck's egg in Mr Dumaurier's never-to-be-forgotten picture, it is with a very distended appearance that he replies to the agitated and inquiring mother: 'How should I know?' and this was just poor *Grudgeon's* case after he had bolted that hare, which was within an inch or two as large as himself. He sat down and whined in my face with a look of pain and penitence which it was pitiful to witness. It was evident he wished, too late, that he had shared that gorgeous banquet with another. I did my best for him, but I was young and inexperienced. I rode up to my eldest brother, and asked whether I had not better take poor *Grudgeon* home, because I thought he was—well, in an interesting situation. Of course I was wrong, in every way; and I got no credit, not even from *Grudgeon*, who, I verily believe, imagined that I had told upon him, and got him his beating, for after that time he never hung about me as before, with an eye to lunch.

Well, I say, until the hare was found all was despondency: when she was started, there was madness, a helter-skelter of ten minutes, during which I almost always lost my hat. I never fell off *Lightfoot*, unless I wanted to do so; but often and often I would guide him away, despite his efforts, from the maddening crowd, and in a solitary spot dismount, and put clover in my hair, to show that I had been pitched off, and then ride home, with a good excuse, to the *Mohicans* and Susan. It was Duplicity, I own, but she is *the natural* (if not the legitimate) daughter of Op-

pression; and was not I oppressed? It was indeed attempted to show that I ought to be thankful to my tyrants, to welcome the whip and the chain—that is, the hunting whip and the curb-chain. 'There is many a boy of your age, sir,' urged my father, 'who would jump at a pony such as *Lightfoot*, and hail your three days a week with my harriers as the highest joy.' 'Very good, papa,' said I cheerfully; 'give *Lightfoot* to some poor boy, and make him happy.'

At which very reasonable and benevolent reply, my father was exceedingly irritated, and muttered something to mamma which implied a doubt of my parentage, and made *her* angry. He couldn't believe I was his own son, it seemed, because I didn't like 'thistle-whipping.' If I had been an impertinent boy, I could have made use of that sarcasm, for I knew very well what hare-hunters are thought of by fox-hunters. Perhaps stag-hunters in their turn have some depreciatory epithet for the infatuated followers of Reynard. The littlenesses and jealousies of sporting folks are beyond belief.

Sometimes, by the by, as a *great treat*, we boys went out with the fox-hounds, which was a much more serious matter to me than going with papa's pack, and, as it were, in the family way. The meets were much farther off, and the fox would generally take an opposite direction from home and Susan. They might call me Molly; but nothing could exceed the effeminate vanity which distinguished my elder brothers upon such great occasions; they were never tired of looking at themselves in their highly polished top-boots; and they took as great delight in their spotless cords as any girl in her first ball-dress. They did not sport scarlet (though

they wanted to do so above everything); but my father exhibited a weakness, exactly the reverse of theirs, for wearing the oldest and shabbiest red coat, with the tails looking—though, as a general rule, I doubt whether fox-hunters use pens—as if he had wiped his pen on them.

Those meets, indeed, struck me, even as a boy, as a ludicrous exhibition of dandyism and conceit; young gentlemen in velvet caps riding their hacks, though it might be but two miles, to cover, and exchanging them for their glossy hunters; and ladies in carriages smiling upon them, and affecting the most absorbing interest in their bays and browns, not without an eye for becoming that sort of gray mare themselves which goes by the name of 'the better horse.' Of course folks may dress in red if they please, and spend a thousand a year apiece in riding after a useless beast, whose evil smell is its only recommendation, and these remarks would never have been penned, if I had not been, so to speak, dragged out to swell their pageant. But as it was, my indifference to such a spectacle became in time contempt. It was impossible that I could retain my respect for 'the county,' or even the chairman of quarter-sessions, when I saw them under such circumstances as these. I often think, when I read the radical papers, that certain editors in embryo may have been treated in their youth as I was, and hence their bitterness against the unpaid magistracy. I picture one, in particular, mounted upon a donkey, following, or attempting to follow, the X.Y.Z., as that famous pack ran round and round in their courses. Foxes *almost* always run in a circle, and, in my opinion, a *vicious* one.

Dear me, what discomforts I suffered in those days; partly from vexation, and partly from hunger (for we did not get home till I don't know what time), I used to eat the fingers of my gloves. I had sufficient good taste, however, to affect to share in the pleasure of these good people, and I remember the high-sheriff coming up to me on one occasion, and after a favourable criticism upon *Lightfoot* (for these folks always put the cart—I mean the horse before the man), saying, 'Well, young gentleman, this is your third season with us, is it not? You seem to enjoy life as much as most people.' He was a good-natured man, and we were all sorry when he dashed out his—I mean broke his neck at a stone wall.

I never took a jump myself—not if I knew it; but once *Lightfoot* took me in and out of a sheepfold, over the hurdles. 'How well your young un sticks to his horse,' observed one who witnessed this involuntary feat to my father; and he was so pleased, that he bought me a new hunting-whip, which, by the by, I could never crack, though I often got the thong round my neck and the lash in my eyes. Of course my dear father meant everything that was kind, but I could never forgive him for having *Lightfoot* clipped. They laughed at me when I expressed my fears that he would catch cold; but, in reality, my apprehension was, that they would cut his mane, which was of the utmost consequence to me to take hold of at a crisis. I should never have got in and out of that sheepfold but for *Lightfoot's* mane; and when this cruel edict was put in force, I had to remain indoors—from indisposition—until his mane grew long again. Nothing would have induced *me*—*no*, not all Scott's novels bound in mo-

rocco—to go out hunting on a horse with a clipped mane (such as they wear in the Elgin Marbles), unless I had been tied on like Mazeppa. The pommel, as an element of adhesiveness, is greatly overrated, though, of course, a drowning man will cling to a straw.

It is not my habit, however, thus to dwell upon my own wrongs, and I have only done so as a fitting introduction to the circumstance which has given the title of 'Hunting Extraordinary' to this unpretending paper. There was one occasion on which I thoroughly enjoyed a day with my father's pack. We had been led rather farther afield than usual, and the family, consisting of my mother and two brothers, my father, the Huntsman, and Whip, were returning home, after what *they* called an indifferent day's sport; only one mad scurry of ten minutes. The 'field' had melted away, and we were jogging along a lonely lane, all, with one exception, rather disconsolate and crest-fallen, when suddenly poor puss started up from a ditch in the road-side, and Babel and Bedlam at once broke loose together. I had got in my studies to somewhere in the fifth volume of the *Mysteries of Udolpho*, and was endeavouring to evolve the dénouement out of my own head, when *Lightfoot* suddenly plunged forward in pursuit, and dissipated my dreams. Of course I lost my hat; but if I had stopped for it, and was left behind, I might also have lost my way, for we were in an utterly strange country, and the hare being fresh, was inclined to show us a good deal of it. She presently led us by a lone cottage, on the skirts of a large coppice, or spinny, at the door of which there stood a woman, *wringing* her hands and weeping bitterly. The hunt, *of course*, went on; human misery is not to be con-

sidered, where the chase is concerned; but my quick ear was always open to tale of woe, and, besides, this poor woman would probably direct me home by a much shorter route than a mad March—no, January hare was likely to take me. So I pulled up *Lightfoot* by a superhuman effort, and inquired What was the matter.

'Oh, good young gentleman,' cried the widow, for such her cap and threadbare but decent suit of mourning announced her to be, 'I have just been robbed of all that I have in the world by a villain. He has taken everything worth having out of my little cottage, and has run away into yonder wood.' Now, an incident of this sort was worth more to me than all the hares in the world. My mind at once recurred to Rudolfo of the Redhand, the Bandit of the Black Forest, and how he was hunted down and slain by the heroic young villager of St Goar and his faithful retriever.

'Upon my faith and honour as a kni—I mean as a gentleman,' cried I, 'you shall be avenged;' and with that I dashed the rowels—but no, I was much too sagacious to wear spurs; I laid my hunting-whip about *Lightfoot* in a manner that must have astonished him beyond all measure, and flew after the hare-hunters like a fireman who sees flame about my Lord's mansion, and knows that whether he is really wanted, or it is only illuminations, he will get well paid for making his engine speed. 'The family' rode well, however, and it is doubtful whether I should have caught them up, had it not been for that most delightful of hunting incidents called a check, which happened to have just occurred; they had overrun the poor creature, I believe, and the huntsman was about to make a cast—

an expression borrowed from the art of statuary—as I galloped up.

'Papa,' cried I, 'there's a robber in the wood, and you must catch him;' for, being a magistrate, I knew he would not dare neglect the interests of justice for the excitement of the chase; nor, indeed, did he evince any wish to do so. We all galloped back to the widow, and heard her story. The villain, she said, had beaten her cruelly, and run off with a bundle, in which he had rolled her clock, her teaspoons, her only pillow, and even her wedding-ring. My father had a great objection to villains, grudging me even the few biographies of them which I possessed, on the ground that they should be neither seen nor heard of, and took up the poor woman's cause with the utmost enthusiasm. He stationed mamma, my brothers, and myself on the skirts of the wood, while the dogs with himself and the two men went in to draw the place, exactly as if they were after their natural quarry. 'As for you, Master Jem,' said he, 'don't go "heading" the wretch, as you did the fox the other day, to the eternal disgrace of your family; but if you see him, let him get well out before you give the view holloa.'

I never was so excited in my life, nor certainly so happy since I had been on horseback; and I willingly promised obedience. The poor widow locked her door, for fear the creature should take to earth in that direction, and, retiring up-stairs, kept watch at her bedroom window. It was a pity that the field had left us, as we were obliged to place ourselves at such a great distance from one another, but we all determined not *to miss* the gentleman. It was my good fortune first to *catch sight* of him. The hounds had been in the cover

about five minutes, and got about half through it, when the game was started so near to *Lightfoot* and myself that we both started too. I think I see him now. He was a big burly man, with a billycock hat slouched over his evil face, and with a large blue bundle slung over his shoulder. Seeing only a boy on a pony, he took no notice of us beyond giving us a wicked scowl; and in accordance with my instructions, I let him run off across the field for about fifty yards, and then I gave the view holloa with a will. Instantly the villain turned, and made at us, probably in the hope of getting back to the wood, but, as I imagined, in order to wreak his vengeance with clasp-knife and bludgeon. For the second time that day did *Lightfoot* feel the unaccustomed whip-lash, and off I galloped to my 'supports.' Neither mamma nor the boys would have been much good against so formidable a ruffian; but just as he reached the edge of the spinny my father and the huntsman sprang out of it, on horseback, and Rudolfo surrendered himself without conditions. I remember, as though it were yesterday, his *wrist* being tied to the thong of the huntsman's whip, and thus secured, his sullenly accompanying us to the little country town, to be placed in durance; while the dogs sniffed about his heels (and especially *Grudgeon*), as though they had been robbed of a perquisite, and would have enjoyed a change of diet exceedingly.

That was the only day's hunting which I ever really enjoyed, and it was almost the last; for very soon afterwards, it fortunately happened that we became reduced in our circumstances, and those family harriers were 'put down.'

FROM THE RANK.

'WHAT was the queerest thing as ever happened to me since I ha' been on the rank? Well, there has been a many queer things, and one a most terrible one. We Four-wheelers sees a deal of life; much more than them 'Ansom chaps does, notwithstanding the little hole in the roof through which they looks down upon parties when parties isn't aware. They drives fast and fast folks, and some has an idea that it is only fast life as *is* Life; but you knows better, sir, I dare say.'

I was taking a long street-drive upon the box-seat of a 'growler,' with my family in the interior, bound for a distant railway station, and I had put a certain question to my cabman, in hopes that his answer might make the journey less tedious. He was a young fellow, smartly dressed, and drove a horse so unusually quick-paced that I felt quite a scruple of conscience in not inquiring into his merits. But then I had asked a cabman about his horse before, and the consequences had been most disastrous; as bad as asking a High Church clergyman about his Chancel, or a valetudinarian about his complaints; there had been no end to the subject *at all:* and now I congratulated myself upon my *reticence,* for a cabman's long-windedness is in inverse

proportion to that of his steed, and since, when my inquiry had only been directed to human affairs, my Jehu showed such signs of verbosity, what would he not have been (thought I) upon the subject of horse-flesh?

'What was the queerest thing as ever happened to *me* as a kebman? Well, perhaps this un was; or, at all events, I remembers it best, because it happened only last week. Oh my! yes, it was a rummy go!' And with that, my friend was so tickled with the recollection, that he rolled on his seat till I thought he would have rolled off it, while the reins so shook in his hand, that the speedy horse, who took it for a sign that he was 'called upon,' started off at score, and missed only by an inch or two making himself a passenger in a *Citizen* 'bus that chanced to be before us with its door open. This formed, of course, the introduction to an exchange of repartees between the cad and my impulsive companion, in which the latter had decidedly the better of it; and then, to my great relief (for I had come in for my share of epithets), we shot into a by-street, more suitable to the composition and appreciation of narrative.

'It was down by Cavendish Square that I took her up—a well-looking woman of nine-and-twenty or thereabouts, and a perfec' lady. Not only well dressed, but well mannered and affable, which is what I goes by, more than all the fine feathers as a bird can wear. "Kebman," says she, "drive me to the nearest chemist;" and I druv her accordingly.

'But she did not get what she wanted at that shop, for she says, "Drive me to another chemist." And I druv her. I should think we went to a matter of fifteen chemists, and yet she couldn't get what she was

in search of. *That,* I began to think, was a little queer, because chemists mostly has things one wants—spirits, or what does as well, for instance, on a wet Sunday, when the publics is closed—besides, everything as one can possibly *not* want, in them green and blue bottles. So, says I, seeing her look a'most as blue as they, "What is it you *do* want, mem?"

'"Want?" said she, in a slow, absent sort of way, which made me somehow get it into my head (and it's there still) that what she did want, poor soul, was p'ison, "well, I want to go into the country."

'"Country!" says I, quite cheerful: "you have got into the keb with the right horse for that, mem. He can go a stretcher, *he* can. Where do yer wish to go to?"

'"I want," says she, speaking just like one in a dream, "I want to go to Bath."

'Now Bath was rather a long order, even for my nag here, and I told her so.

'"Very good," says she. "Drive me to another chemist."

'Then, as it didn't seem of any consequence to herself where she was druv, I took her up Maida 'Ill way (where my stable is), and tried a chemist or two in those parts; but none of them had got the thing she wanted any more than the others; and she looked more concerned and vexed than ever. She was such a perfec' lady to look at, and so affable, that I felt pity for her; and though it was not to my advantage, I said, says I, "If you really do want to go to Bath, I had better drive you to the Great Western Railway, where you can *take* the train."

'"*Ah,*" says she, with a sort of a shrink, as though

somebody had struck her, "but isn't that Paddington Station?"

'"Well, mem," says I, "I will not deceive you, it certainly is."

'"You are a good man," says she. "I wish everybody was like you" (which was very kind of her, I'm sure); "but I can't go to Paddington Station, because my husband is there waiting for me."

'Well, for all I know, this might be a very good reason; I know many a good woman—'Ansom kebmen's wives—as avoids Paddington Station on that account, and small blame to them. So, since the chemists couldn't suit her, I offers her an alterative of my own.'

'Alternative,' said I involuntarily.

'Very likely, sir; only *I* always calls it alterative,' replied my Jehu coldly. I had offended him by my foolish particularity, and it cost me a fourpenny cigar out of my case to re-establish his good-humour.

'Well,' continued he, puffing slowly, and speaking with greater deliberation than ever, '"If I can't take you to Bath," says I, "I can take you somewheres on the way—say Windsor."

'"How much would that be?" says she, taking out her purse.

'"We couldn't do it, speaking for horse and man, under two pund, mem, and there's not another horse on our rank as could do it at all."

'"Two pund is a large sum," says she.

'"Well," says I, "say Ealing. I will take you to Ealing Station, mem, for twelve-and-six, including all these chemists"—and indeed I had got off and on my box, for a matter of forty times, by this; so I don't think it was unreasonable. I would not have been

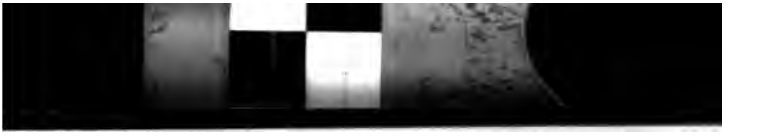
hard upon that 'ere fare, if it was ever so, partly because of the p'ison as I had in my mind, and partly because she was such a perfec' lady.

'"You may drive me to Ealing Station, then," says she, in a sort of despairing voice; and I druv her. The train to Bath was not due for an hour or so, and she wanted to try the chemists at Ealing; but that I wouldn't have nothing to do with. A country chemist might have given the poor thing what I am sadly afraid she wanted, and I wasn't going to have anything happen in my keb, if I knowed it—out at Ealing.

'"No," says I, "mem, asking your pardon, but no more physic-shops for me. If you would take my advice, you would let me drive you to a public-house, for a drop of somethink better than physic, and of which I am sure you stands in need."

'"As you please," says she, "kebman," in such a soft and miserable voice as went to my heart; just as though she did not care where she was druv to, if it couldn't be out of the world. So I pulled up at a public, and gave her some bread and cheese—good Wiltshire it was, and yet she took no more than a mouse might nibble, and a little sup of porter, which she drank as though it was black dose, sitting all the while in the keb; while I made a goodish meal, I promise you. Then we went back to the station, and she gave me her purse to get her ticket—first-class—to Bath for her, "for," says she, "I can trust you with untold gold" (which was also very kind of her, and I hope the truth). Then I gives her the ticket and her purse. "And will you stay here in the keb," says I, "or wait upon the platform, mem?"

"I will stay in the keb, thank you," says she; and



upon my life, sir, I do believe it was because I had been tolerably kind to her, and she did not like to part company with me before she was obliged. She had had "hard lines" in the world, and been very badly treated by some one or another, you may take your davey: poor soul.

'I did not like to trouble her with such a matter, but as the time was getting very short, I says, "Please, mem, you have forgot to give me the twelve-and-six:" for as for the bread and cheese and porter *that* she had paid for on the spot.

'"O dear, I am so sorry," says she: "I fancied you would have paid yourself when I gave you the purse."

'"No, mem," says I. "I should never have thought of taking any such a liberty."

'Then she paid me, saying with a sad smile, "I am afraid I have been very troublesome," and wished me "good-day." And then the station-bell rang.

'I had the curiosity to peep through the door when the train came in, and watch her. She ran down the platform looking earnestly into every individual carriage, and would have been left behind altogether, but for the guard who opened the door, and popped her in at the very last moment. I was sorry to leave her, for I never took a fare who was a more perfec' lady; but I was somehow glad, too, to get her out of my keb. There was somethink very queer about her, that you may depend: and if she were mad (which, however, I don't think as she was), she must ha' been druv and druv, by some wus-hearted chap than me, until she was druv out of her wits.

'Perhaps he is sorry for what he has done by this *time, says* I to myself, and this here party will be

adver*tised*, and I took great count of her dress and appearance, in case she should. But, curiously enough, nothing came of it all; and yet, even as it stands it seems to me one of the queerest starts as ever I came across since I ha' been on the rank.'

'It was undoubtedly very queer,' said I. 'But you hinted something, my friend, of a certain terrible adventure that had once happened to you: I should like to hear that too, please.'

'Why, this is what I call reg'lar sucking a cove's brains,' responded my cabman, looking up at me with a cunning leer. 'If I did not see as you was a family man, with luggage and that, I should be a'most inclined to believe as you was some literary carakter. There's a many on 'em about, Maida 'Ill way; only, when they rides at all, they takes a 'Ansom.'

Remembering what Mr Pickwick had suffered at a cabman's hands, from using a notebook, I hastened to clear my character from this imputation, and to assure my companion that I had no other idea in questioning him beyond that of increasing my knowledge of human nature, for observing which he must have had so many and exceptional opportunities.

'Well, that's true,' said he, greatly mollified. 'Considering the various parties as uses four-wheels, I knows of nobody (excep' perhaps some as keep a public) who is so likely to know a thing or two as one of us. Deary me; the games as has been a going on in this here very keb!'

'Games?' said I. 'What games can people play in a cab?'

'Why, bless yer, lots of games. I don't mean cards *and that*—though I *have* known 'em play cards, with

my 'ind cushion on their laps for a table—but all sorts of schemes and devices, played by all classes of folks. I have druv marquishes, and I have druv parties as you would not have thought could ever stand a shillin' fare. I have druv the perlice, and I have druv thieves. I don't care who it is, so long as they don't want to be druv to the Fever 'Ospital.'

'Was the horrible case you spoke of a case of infection?' inquired I.

'No: it was a deuced sight worse than that, sir. It was summut as sends a cold chill to my marrer, whenever I thinks about it. And yet it began so cheerful. Just after I first began to be a kebman, I was 'ailed in the Kilburn Road by a couple of fares: two middle-aged comfortable ladies, small tradesmen's widows, as I should set 'em down as, and they asked me how much it was to Blackfriars. "Half-a-crown," says I.

'"Werry good, young man," says the fattest of 'em: "then drive away, and just stop at the first public-house, will ye?"

'Well, I pulled up, willing enough, at the first public, and they gave me a shilling, and had some gin and beer, and "Never mind the change, young man," says the fattest; "but drive along sharp, and stop at the next public-house."

'Well, between Kilburn and Blackfriars, I should think they stopped at a matter of four-and-twenty public-houses. The lady with the chemists was nothing to them; moreover, unlike her, they never failed to get what they wanted at each, until they had took a great deal more than was good for them, and I must say as they had made me a little "fresh" myself. And every

time it was, "You may keep the change, young man;" so that I had at last more than five-and-twenty shillings of it (mostly in coppers). This is all werry nice, thought I, as long as it lasts; but sooner or later these here parties will be a dozing off, and expec' me to see 'em home, which may be will be the perlice station, for they had not told me their address yet, but only Blackfriars. They must ha' been very much accustomed to strong liquors, for unless it was sobbin' and cryin' a bit, which the one as was not the fattest did continual, they showed no signs of bein' overcome. What a middle-aged female of the respectable class *can* take, and yet sit in a keb, is only known to us drivers; but these two, they beat all as ever I see. Well, at Blackfriars, they gave their address at last. It was a queer little street, but very respectable-looking, and I druv 'em up to their house, which I noticed had all the blinds down. They got out without much help; and the one as was not the fattest, she speaks to me for the first time, and says, "Young man," says she, "you have druv us well and safe, and over and above your fare, you shall see my dear daughter."

'Well,' thought I, 'here is a queer start. This stout party has taken such a fancy to Dick Braddle (which was me), that she wants him to become her son-in-law;' and I larfed aloud.

"Don't larf," said she, quite solemn like, and pointing to the drawn-down blinds; "but come in." Well, I went in. Not into the parlour, as I expected, but up-stairs, the two ladies leading the way. At the first-floor, I stopped. I did not like it—the house was *so dark* and still; but then, thinks I, "Lor, I'm only

a poor kebman, and it's their own money I've got in my pocket after all. Why should they want to rob *me?*" So I went on, into the second-floor front, which was a sittin'-room. Here the old lady as was not the fattest began to moan and cry, and, pointing to the sofy, on which lay somethin' covered with a sheet, she says, "There is my poor daughter."

'And the other one she turned the sheet back a little, and there was the face of a dead young lady, very white and quiet, but looking to me, as had never seen any one dead before, most awful. Coming, as it did, so sudden and unexpected, and just after I had been larfing down below, it gave me, I do assure you, an uncommon turn.'

'Indeed, I can quite believe it, Mr Braddle,' said I, 'if the thing happened as you state: but did it really happen?'

'As true as I sit here, sir. Why, who would ever have invented such a story?'

'Then, what is your explanation of the two women's conduct?'

'That ain't my business, sir. My business was only to drive 'em; and you may be sure I did not stop a minit more in that 'ere house to ask any questions. It is, however, my opinion that the old lady as was not the fattest was really the poor girl's mother, and that sorrow had made her take to drink for comfort: and as for the other, she was glad enough to sympathize with her friend so far as drinking the liquor went. But, at the time, it seemed to me a most terrible start, I do assure you. It's the worst thing as has ever happened to me yet, since I ha' been on the rank; and I

wouldn't have it happen again for twice twenty-five shillings.—Here's the station, sir; and see, you've got fifteen minits to spare, all along of my good horse, which I hope you will take into account in the fare, according.

ON HER MAJESTY'S SERVICE: SPECIAL.

When I was first appointed one of Her Majesty's Inspectors of Machinery, I thought myself a considerable personage. I was but a young man; but it seemed to me that I was set for ever above the troubles, and certainly the dependencies, of life; that there was no need to *kotow* to any man, and that, by no possible combination of circumstances, could I ever be 'put in a funk.' It was fated, however, that within a very few months of my appointment, I was to endure a greater fright than I had suffered in my lifetime before; greater than when I was a schoolboy told to 'stay' at Eton (which was the delicate introduction to the flogging-block); and greater than when I went in for my Civil Service examination, choked with dates to the throat-gate. As in the latter case, it was a moral fright, and not a physical one. I was not caught in the machinery which it was my duty to overlook (as has happened to a brother-inspector), and dragged slowly in by the coat-tails to an assortment of cogs and wheels, which I only escaped by the skin—of my teeth; but I am not sure I would not have preferred the brief agony of such a position to the slow mental torture which I did suffer.

When inspectors of machinery were first appointed, many manufacturers resented it exceedingly. They contended that their mill was their castle, and that a tyrannical government had no right whatever to send its minions to pry into their goings-on. If the machinery *was* unfenced, and the workmen did occasionally lose limb or life in consequence, that was *their* look-out, not ours. Such misadventures made people all the sharper—that is, those who were left alive. The principle of free trade was invaded by this meddling in its most vital part. England was not worth living in under such a system of espionage; and if it was persevered in, they (for one) would throw up their business, and leave this benighted land. However, as a general rule, they did not throw up their business; they remained where they were, and 'took it out' of the inspectors.

The stories I have had to listen to from Masters with respect to the certain ruin that awaited Trade under such circumstances, would have been terrible had not the stories of their work-people concerning matters that had happened, before the law stepped in, in the way of mutilation and death, weighed so much more heavily in the opposite scale. Of course, I was well treated. There are no more hospitable people in the world than your merchant-princes; and the cases were few indeed where those whom it was my duty to visit, and perhaps to rebuke, failed to dissociate me personally from my unwelcome office. Mr Wolfton, however, a great Leeds manufacturer, proved an exception to this rule. He not only resented government *interference*, but mine. He was almost rude to me in the presence of his workmen; and not content with

expressing himself very strongly upon the 'unfenced machinery' question, actually addressed to me, from his country-house, a letter, couched in the same violent terms, which I had the honour to receive some days afterwards at my residence in London. I wrote him, as it was my duty to do, a temperate and reasonable reply; but his epistle tickled me excessively, and happening to be corresponding that day with my college friend, Jack Rawlings, who has a very keen sense of humour, I epitomized Mr Wolfton's communication for his benefit, adding a few lively comments of my own!

There was not the least harm in my doing so, of course. It was a 'privileged communication.' It would be hard indeed if one might not discuss the character of our fellow-creatures with one's friend. Mr W. himself would scarcely have expected that I should write to Jack about unfenced machinery and the natural rights of employers of labour as I did to him. But it was essential not to *put the two letters in the wrong envelopes.*

Let me here adjure any young hand at business who may read this dreadful story, never to begin a second letter until he has finished the first, and placed it in its properly-directed envelope. In the days of sand-bottles, the saving of time might have been some object; but by help of the blotting-paper, the time that may be lost in arranging matters in their right order is so infinitesimal, that it should always be done. For only imagine the risk that may be run if you do otherwise! You may be ordering hearth-rugs of your correspondent at Cape Coast, and trying to import ivory and gold-dust from Manchester. Your African agent will, of course, imagine you are making heartless jokes

upon his climate; and your Lancashire friend—who makes millions out of old bones and devil's-dust—will resent your pleasantry as still more offensive. But even then you will not have made such a mistake as *I* made. It would have been the height of rudeness in any man to have written such a letter as I was involuntarily sending to the magnate of Leeds; but in an official—an inspector! I protest that even at this distance of time it makes me damp to think of it. You will ask me, perhaps, how was it that I came to know that I *had* put the letters into their wrong envelopes? I can scarcely answer that question satisfactorily in a logical sense; all I know is, the fact flashed upon me hours afterwards, as I sat in my office in Whitehall, and I felt at once as certain that it had occurred as I did of my own existence. I cast one agonized glance at the clock, and saw that it was not yet four—that there was an hour and a half before the country mails left the receiving-office in Bayswater, and I called a Hansom, and drove thither at topmost speed.

Yes, I remembered it all now; my quiet but firmly expressed communication to Mr Wolfton had been laid on the right hand of my desk to dry, but the envelope addressed to him I had tossed to the left; then I had scribbled off my facetious letter to Jack, and addressed *his* envelope; then, without enclosing either letter, I had fallen into 'a brown-study,' a dream of college-life, with its palmy days of friendship and careless joy; and then—mechanically—I had folded up the letters, and put them each into the nearest envelope, which was the wrong one. That was how I worked it *all out* in my head, as I flew through the air in that *rapid Hansom*; but however the thing had come to

pass, I felt quite sure that it had done so; the means were now of little moment, but the consequences? For one thing, I should lose my inspectorship—that was a dead certainty; for another, I should lose Louisa. Upon the strength of my appointment, I had ventured to propose to the very dearest girl in all the world—so dear, that her father could hardly be induced to part with her to me, even at the considerable figure which I was then able to command; and now, or at least in a few days, if I could not stop that letter, I should be almost penniless. How I cursed the 'facilities' afforded by the perfection of our post-office system! The idea of that letter, now lying in its drawer at Beak Street, Bayswater, being at Shoddy Hall in Yorkshire—Mr Wolfton's country residence—at seven A.M. next morning, was almost insupportable. Fortunately, the envelope was an official one; O.H.M.S. was printed on the left-hand corner of it; and on this circumstance I greatly relied. I had only to explain, I thought, that I was an official personage, and that that letter was *my* letter, to get it back again out of the post. I was soon undeceived, however, upon this point. The head of the little postal establishment at Beak Street would not even so much as let me look at it. Under that long white bib—for he was a grocer, and wore one—beat the heart of a true patriot. He was there, he said, to do his 'dooty;' a certain grave charge had been assigned to him, under conditions, and he was not the man to break faith. 'But, my good sir,' urged I, 'I am really the person I represent myself to be. You can come to Whitehall with me, and satisfy yourself of that fact. I am in the Queen's service, like yourself—and I shall make a point of representing in the

proper quarter how resolutely you have stood by your regulations. But there is a point beyond which Determination becomes Obstinacy. To refuse me this letter is to obstruct the Public Good.'

'Sir,' replied the intrepid wretch, 'if the Queen herself, in person, was to say to me, "Mr Binks, I've made a mistake, and dropped a letter into your box as ought not to go," I shouldn't let her have it back again. "Parliament may do it, ma'am," I should say to her; "and it is to parliament as you must apply; Binks has not the power."'

I was desperate by this time, for it only wanted twenty minutes of the mail leaving, and I took out of my purse a five-pound note, and looked at him significantly.

I saw that there was an inward struggle in his British heart, and I whispered, like another Mephistopheles, 'I will give you Ten.'

'It's as much as my place is worth,' said the little man, with a sigh, 'though nobody likes "turning away money" less than I do. I can't do it. And let me tell you, sir,' added he, with genuine dignity, 'it's a mean thing in a gentleman, as you profess yourself to be, to tempt a poor man like this.'

I honoured him in my heart, though I also felt I could have strangled him on the spot.

'You are as incorruptible,' said I bitterly, 'as Robespierre.'

This evidently pleased and flattered him. 'Anything that I can do for you, sir,' said he, 'without prejudice to the public service, I am sure I shall be *most* happy. Any information'——

'What offices will this Yorkshire letter have to

pass through?' inquired I, with a sudden gleam of hope.

The little man produced his postal books at once. 'It will leave the mail-train, sir, at Dodgely Junction, where it will be stamped; then it will go by mail-cart to Milbeck, which must be a small village, for there are no post-office orders issued at it.'

With this meagre help I was obliged to be content, and I resolved at once to go by that mail-train. There was still time, of course, by paying extra postage, to send a letter of apology to Shoddy Hall, which should arrive coincidently with my unfortunate despatch; but I felt that that would be worse than useless. Mr Wolfton was not the man to accept an apology; he was rather the man to come up by special train to lay his case before my superiors, and avenge his outraged dignity at all hazards: he was rather the man to rise in his place in parliament (for he was an M.P.), and denounce me as the insolent minion of a tyrannical government; and I seemed to see him doing it, with that suicidal letter in his clenched right hand.

I started by the mail-train that night, with my thoughts as burglariously fixed upon the post-office van, as though I was a second 'Jem the Penman,' bent on a bullion-robbery: but, of course, *that* was not in my programme. Notwithstanding my failure in Beak Street, I determined to try my luck with the Dodgely postmaster; a provincial official was more likely to be acted on by a semblance of authority, and was I not on Her Majesty's service, travelling special to stop a letter with O.H.M.S. in the corner of its address?

It was five o'clock in the morning when I arrived at the Junction.

sible to imagine; the Dodgely mail-bags had a carriage provided for them, but there was none for me. I ran after it wildly for a mile and a half, and reached the post-office within a minute or two of their arrival, hot and panting—though it was in the depth of winter. They would have thought me mad, had I gone in as I was, so I staid outside to cool body and mind, suspiciously eyed by a rural policeman. Then I rang the bell, and demanded to see the postmaster. That official himself, in dressing-gown and slippers, opened the door. 'I am come on particular busi'——

'Can't see you now, sir,' interrupted he curtly, 'whatever it is; we're sorting the mails.'

He would have slammed to the door, but I thrust my umbrella in, and prevented that. 'It is about the mails that I am here,' said I. 'I have come down special from London, on Her Majesty's Service. There has been a letter sent by mistake.'

'Have you an order from the postmaster-general?'

'Yes—at least not exactly.'

He would not hear another word. It is my belief that he thought I was a person of bad character.

'You had best be off,' he said, and he looked significantly at the policeman. It was most humiliating to an assistant-inspector of machinery. But I took his advice, and went off—to the inn. Everybody was in bed, of course; but I knocked them up, exhibited a purse full of sovereigns, and ordered a post-chaise-and-four to Milbeck. This was eight miles off; and the mail-cart rattled through the empty streets before my horses were brought out. It would have been shorter work to have taken a gig, but I trusted to my four horses to produce an impression. We did the eight

miles in three-quarters of an hour, and met the mail-cart coming out of the village.

The Milbeck post-office was also an establishment for the sale of children's toys, half-penny balls of string, starch, cheap periodicals, and lollipops. It was kept by a widow woman of about eighty, and excessively deaf. She did not even hear the thunder of my equipage-and-four as it dashed up to her humble dwelling. But she could see with tolerable distinctness, and when her attention was drawn to my turn-out by her daughter and assistant, she ejaculated, 'Lord ha' mercy!'

'Madam,' said I, with a lofty air, 'I have been despatched by Her Majesty the Queen to recover a communication which has been sent by mistake by this morning's mail. Your letters, I see—for they were all lying in a heap on the little counter—have not as yet been delivered.'

'No, sir, no: you may take your pick on 'em, I'm sure.'

'Not at all, madam,' said I. 'I am not empowered to do that.' For it began to strike me for the first time that I might be getting into as great a hobble for meddling with 'the property of Her Majesty's Postmaster-General,' as for outraging the dignity of the proprietor of Shoddy Hall. The old lady, on the other hand, could get into no trouble, through being imposed on by so authoritative a messenger; and even if she lost her post, I had only to pension her and her daughter for their natural lives. 'The letter, madam, which I have to request you to hand over is enclosed (as I am instructed) in an official envelope, with O.H.M.S. *in the corner.*'

'Here it is, mother,' cried the younger woman; and the old lady fortunately snatched it out of her hand before she could read the address, and put it into mine, as though it had contained some explosive substance. 'It wasn't *my* fault,' pleaded she, 'as it got there, I'm sure.'

'No, madam, no; you are not to blame in the affair at all,' observed I, in a tone of patronage, as I placed the precious missive in my breast-pocket. 'What pretty toys you have, and what exceedingly tempting lollipops! I must take some back to my young friends at home.'

I invested five shillings in those two articles of commerce, thereby buying up almost her entire stock, and then the old lady and I parted upon the best of terms. As I left the shop, I heard her say to her daughter, 'Now, Eliza*beth*, make haste with the squire's letters; you know what a caddel he makes if they beant sent over to the lodge at once.'

So it really had been a very narrow shave indeed.

I wonder my hair didn't turn gray during those dreadful twelve hours, and I shall never forget the worry and anxiety I suffered during them as long as I live. But the worst of it was, when I came to look into the epistle, about which I had been put in such a state, I found that I had placed Mr Wolfton's letter in the right envelope after all! My alarm had been entirely without foundation; I had travelled one hundred and sixty miles by railway, hired a carriage-and-four, and bought half a shopful of toys and lollypops—and all for nothing.

A PAPER CHASE.

CHAPTER I.

At the public school which imparted to me (for a considerable consideration) some scanty knowledge of Greek, more of Latin, and the very gentlemanly 'Tone' for which it had a patent, one of our chief amusements used to be the Paper-chase. Some fleet-footed youth, carrying a huge bag of white paper cut small, was allowed half-an-hour's start of the rest of us, and we, like hounds, pursued him, not by sight, but by the tracks which he was bound to leave us at reasonable distances, in the shape of a handful of paper-cuttings. We were compelled to follow all his zigzags, even although we might have a shrewd suspicion of the line he had taken; and when he was close pushed, he might give us 'a check'—not too long a one, or else he got his head punched—on which occasions there was a great opportunity for the exhibition of a natural sagacity in making casts which should recover the trail. I was not distinguished for Latin, less for Greek, and I do not feel a sure confidence that I ever acquired the Tone; but this I will say, that, when these checks occurred, Granby *minor* (for I had a big brother at the

same school) was the boy they always looked to for first 'giving tongue,' in token of having picked up the lost thread. Then through the hedge, and across the brook, and over the wall, without much consideration for the rights of property, or possible injury to the young corn, we sped; and after a splendid burst, ran in upon our fox just as he took to earth—which was as often as not (in spite of the Tone) in a public-house. I have dined at good tables since then, but never enjoyed them as I did the cold meat, or even the bread and cheese, of those humble hostelries. I have had many a queer check since then, and sought for good paper in the City under quite as difficult circumstances; but I have never known such pleasurable excitement as those paper-chases of my youth afforded. The hounds of those days, if not old and toothless, are short-winded now; the fox (poor fellow) has gone to earth in sober truth; but not only do I keep green the memory of that merry game—I owe to it, as I honestly believe, or, at all events, to the qualities it engendered, my preservation from ruin and disgrace.

As I have already stated, I was not an elder son. My brother inherited a pretty penny, and has been enabled to enjoy his fox-hunting (on horseback, and after a real fox) from that far-back time even until now; but I, with only a few thousand pounds from the mother's side, was obliged to look around me for a livelihood. Possessed of the Greek and Latin and the Tone, it was expected by my family that all professions would be only too glad not only to welcome but to purchase my valuable services; but (although I tried *one or two*) I did not find this to be the case. And *here*—though the remark is beside the subject of my

story—I cannot help expressing my astonishment at the number of promising lads that were with me at that fashionable seminary who have since found themselves in the like position, and at last have become wine-merchants. What possible advantage can the Tone be to them in that calling? If it had been the *Taste* that was cultivated at so great an expense, and with such gratifying results, I could understand why so many younger sons of excellent families—— But, however, to my tale.

Perhaps I myself should have been a wine-merchant, if it had not been for my godfather, a person who had never given me anything beyond a silver spoon in infancy (a poor substitute for that which my brother was born with in his mouth), and a 'tip' of a sovereign to my nurse, but who all of a sudden settled that I should make an excellent banker, and furnished me with the money to procure me a small partnership in a certain provincial house. It was not a very magnificent position; but it was better than being a hanger-on at rich men's houses, a poor relation always coming to beg, and dismissed each time with the money indeed, but with less and less of ceremony.

After I had been junior partner—which is a very different thing from a sleeping one—for several months, and had learned my duties thoroughly, I was appointed sole manager of a new but promising branch of our main business, in a large county-town, which I will call Millsome. My staff was a very limited one, consisting, besides the servants, of only two clerks, father and son, the former of whom had been in the employment of the firm for thirty years; the latter, a young man of about *nineteen*. Thanks to the existence of my big brother

although scarcely thanks to *him*), I was received into very good county society, such as one in my calling could scarcely have aspired to; and having been accustomed to a life of pleasure, I did not hesitate to take advantage of all invitations which did not absolutely interfere with my work. I felt that I could trust old Grubb implicitly; and my confidence was not misplaced. But I had not the same high opinion of Master Richard, his son, who, I had discovered, was addicted to little extravagances, late hours, and the illicit use of a latch-key. I had not told his father, for having been somewhat 'fast' in my own youth, I was inclined to leniency upon such points, but I had read a proclamation against vice and immorality to the young man, and he was, in a manner, upon his trial. What in an undergraduate at Cambridge is mere wilfulness, may, in a banker's clerk, be the parent of crime, and therefore, for his own sake (as well as the bank's), I did not mince matters. It was understood between us, that upon the next proved occasion of gross 'unsteadiness,' Master Richard would lose his post.

It was about two months after this rebuke that old Grubb was suddenly sent for to our main establishment, to elucidate some statement of accounts. I was engaged to spend that day at a certain country-house, where I had also agreed to sleep, and I had some misgivings about leaving the bank in charge of that wayward lad, but as it so happened, there was but little money in the strong-box, and since it was not a market-day, it was unlikely that much would be lodged within the next half-a-dozen business hours. I enjoyed my *day's shooting*, therefore, according to the original

programme, and was fully prepared to enjoy the feast that was to follow :

> A gathering of the Tory,
> A dinner, and then a dance,
> For the maids and marriage-makers—
> When a circumstance occurred
> Which, for me, quenched all this glory.

One of the first guests that made his appearance in the drawing-room happened to be a bluff country squire of my acquaintance. 'Hullo!' cried he laughing, '*you* here, Granby! I am very sorry to see you. I had pictured you to myself sitting upon your iron bank-chest, armed to the teeth, and guarding my ten thousand pounds with drawn sword and cocked revolver.'

'Your ten thousand pounds?' said I in astonishment.

'Yes, sir. The purchase-money of the farm at Millsome. I could not resist such a bait as that, although I have often said I could never sell the old place. I paid in the money not three hours ago; and I think it shows an immense confidence in you, in these days of panic, to let you have the fingering of such a sum, although it will not be for many days. My broker tells me that there's an excellent opportunity for investment just now in Indian railways.' And off he went upon that topic, as an ignorant man, who has been just primed upon one subject, does go off; while I, pretending to be all attention, felt myself stiffening into stone with the thought of all that money being at the mercy of Mr Grubb, junior, who had once had a latch-key made for his private use to fit the bank-door.

My appetite failed so completely after this intelli-

gence, that the French *artiste* might have been my old housekeeper at Millsome, for any appreciation I had for his dishes; while my spirits sank from their high level to such a point that even my good-tempered host could not refrain from remarking upon them. 'Why, Granby,' said he, when the last guest was gone, and we found ourselves in the cozy smoking-room, 'what on earth has come to you since the morning? My wife quite counted upon you for making the party go off cheerily, instead of which you have played the part of a wet-blanket.'

'I am very sorry,' said I humbly; 'I can only plead guilty to the charge, and throw myself on the mercy of the court;' and thereupon I told him the cause of all my trouble.

'My dear fellow,' said he, when I had finished, 'we have been friends too many years for either of us to stand on ceremony. You know we shall be sorry to lose you, but, on the other hand, I am not selfish enough to wish you to stay against your will. It is for you to measure the risk you run by remaining here; but if I were in your place—that is, thirty years younger than I am, and with my bread to make—I should sleep to-night at Millsome, even if I had to walk the whole ten miles. I can send you in the dog-cart, however, and the old mare will spin you over within the hour. It is not twelve yet, and the trap shall be at the door in ten minutes. I was your father's friend, and I advise you as I think he would do were he alive.'

'You are right,' said I: 'your proposal quite agrees *with* my own sense of duty; and I thank you very *much.*'

So, within the quarter of an hour I was on my road home, behind the swift-trotting old bay, and yet with a sense that I ought to be flying, and a presentiment that I was too late.

Of course, when I arrived at Millsome, all the town was asleep, including my housekeeper, and I rang the bank-bell a dozen times before I roused her. At last she came, shivering and grumbling, and a 'Lor, who would ha' thought o' seein' you, *Mus*ter Granby!'

'Are you all right at home?' inquired I nervously. 'Where is Mr Richard?'

'In bed and asleep, sir, I don't doubt; and fast asleep too, or he'd a heerd the bell, and come down to save my old limbs, for he's a kind lad.'

That was true: and Mr Richard's good looks and pleasant manners had made such way with the good dame, that she habitually spoiled him; cooked him titbits for supper, and sat up for him until morning, on those rare occasions when he had leave from his father, who was a strict disciplinarian, to stay out.

'You are quite sure he is *in?*' said I, as I stood in the hall, hesitating as to whether I should go up and see for myself, and somewhat repenting of my suspicions and precipitancy.

'O yes; he went to his room very early—before nine o'clock: he had a headache, poor lad, and bade me not to disturb him.—You won't wake him, please, sir, unless it's anything very particular.'

I did not like the notion of these early hours in my young gentleman at all, and ran up to his room at once, taking three steps at a time. His door was fastened, and there was no reply to my repeated summons. With a kick, that I had been famous for at school, and

with which I had burst many a 'study'-door in, whose too diligent tenant had ventured to refuse me admittance, I sent the timber flying, and found myself in Mr Grubb, junior's, apartment. The bird was flown. The bed had not even been slept in. His sudden indisposition had been only a device to conceal his departure, which had probably taken place before the housekeeper had fastened the place up for the night. I went down to the strong-room, without much hope indeed, but to make certain that my fears were well founded before taking further steps. If the ten thousand pounds' worth of notes—for the purchase-money, the squire had informed me, had been all paid in notes of the Bank of England—were not in the iron chest, where it was Richard's duty to have placed them, then my worst suspicions would be realized, and the firm had been robbed. Not a note was there. The young scoundrel had made off with the whole of that enormous booty.

CHAPTER II.

HERE was a position! What would my partners have to say to me, through whose culpable neglect they had experienced so serious a loss? How could I ever repay them—how make amends for so gigantic a calamity? For a few moments, despair seemed utterly to take possession of me. I saw my new-born hopes of making my own way in the world utterly blighted. *I was a* wine-merchant already, soliciting small orders.

I should pass my old age in an almshouse for decayed gentlemen, who had in vain acquired 'the Tone' at a fashionable public school.

But my mind, naturally elastic, did not suffer itself to be thus depressed for long. Because I had been a fool, was I also to be a sluggard in making reparation for my folly? No. My partners should at least be obliged to confess that, however careless had been my conduct in permitting the mischief, I was not deficient in energy in repairing it. If Mr Richard Grubb was upon the face of the earth, I registered a solemn vow that I would find him.

But how to begin? That was the question. I knew nothing, absolutely nothing to start with, except that the man was gone, and the money with him. The money? If I did but know the numbers of the notes, or could get to know them before the Bank of England opened its doors that day (it was already past one o'clock A.M.), they could be stopped by a telegraphic message, and the disposal of them at all events made difficult. The squire who had paid them in lived but five miles off, and it was probable that himself or his lawyer would be able to afford me so much information. I had already seized my hat, when a sudden thought made me turn my steps into the counting-house. Unless the young scamp had resolved to steal this money upon the instant that he handled it, he would have booked the numbers in the usual way, and I should find them in the entry-book. And there they were, sure enough. It must have taken him an hour to set them down. There were fifty one-hundred pound notes, fifty fifties, fifty tens, and four hundred fives. What an idiot he must have been not to have

torn out that damning record! True, he was well convinced that I should not return home until near midday, and long after he had realized his ill-gotten gains; but old Grubb, his father, was to be back to breakfast in time for the opening of the bank, and finding his son fled, what more likely than that the astute old man should suspect something wrong, examine the entry-box, compare it with the contents of the cash-book, and telegraph at once to town. The omission, however, was characteristic of the young man; a creature of impulse, incapable of any deep-laid scheme, and who was at that moment, perhaps, regretting the perilous step he had taken, and wishing all undone that had been done. That such was the nature of Richard Grubb, I felt convinced, and upon that conviction I acted during the whole of the pursuit which engaged me for the next three weeks. Perhaps, if he had been a more resolute man, he would have eluded me. I may be permitted to add, however, that not everybody—nor every professional detective, as will be seen—would have caught even Mr Richard Grubb. It was a paper chase of the most exciting sort, and Granby *minor*, as he flatters himself, did no discredit to the reputation of his boyhood.

My first steps were turned, of course, to the railway station, where the face of the absconded youth might, I hoped, be not unknown to the booking-clerk. That official, naturally enough, had taken himself home directly after the departure of the mail, but the night-porter was fortunately able to give me the necessary information. Richard Grubb had started from Millsome by the last train, which, with the exception of one junction station, stopped nowhere on its way to

Town. There had been but three passengers, and they had all booked for London. But had they all gone thither? I telegraphed to the terminus for the number of Millsome tickets received there by the mail, and found that they tallied with the number booked. My fox was therefore in London: a large cover enough, indeed, but still it was something to have ascertained even that much. It was the first trace of the bagged paper. Next I telegraphed to a man upon whom I could rely to stop the stolen notes at the Bank of England, waited for his answer, and then went home to bed with a little less perturbation of spirit than I had known for the last three hours.

By the first train in the morning I hurried to Town, and 'put myself into communication,' as the phrase goes—circumlocutory, and therefore appropriate enough—with the authorities in Scotland Yard. I procured the services of what is always termed by courtesy 'an active and intelligent detective,' and fondly imagined that the object of my mission was already half attained. Never was man more mistaken. That worthy officer—who did not attach himself to me for nothing, you may be sure—was not a whit more skilful in looking for a needle in a bottle of hay than myself, and I should have done just as well without him. As I had fully expected, no attempt was made to change the stolen notes at the bank that day. Grubb, junior, even although he had no reason to suspect that they were already stopped, had probably not had the courage to effect that *coup* in person, and knew nobody whom he could trust to do it for him. I felt convinced that his intention was to go abroad with his plunder. In the mean time, we did what we could. From what I

knew of his tastes, I thought it likely he would begin to enjoy himself after his fashion, 'and see life' as it exhibited itself in Town during the small-hours. Mr Inspector Lynx and myself saw a great deal of it ourselves during that week, and mixed with some very queer company, but without coming upon the young gentleman we sought. At the end of that period came a letter from poor old Grubb—the second, by the by, I had received from him: the first would have melted a stone, so grieved and sorrowful was the honest creature at the delinquency of his scape-grace offspring—and this communication gave us our first clue. It enclosed a note from the lad himself, expressing some regret for the step he had committed, but at the same time a resolution to keep what he had got. 'It is too late now,' he said. 'By the time you get this, I shall be far away, and you will never see me again.' The letter purported to be written from the *Brazen Cross Hotel*, but that address was in the young man's own handwriting, the printed address at the top of the sheet having been most carefully erased. The post-mark, too, showed a different postal district than that in which the inn in question was situated. However, we went at once to the *Brazen Cross*, and found that the young man had really been there—he was a singularly handsome youth, and easily described and recognized—but that he had only remained there two nights; the first two he had passed in Town. We spent hours poring over his note, and endeavouring to decipher the crossed-out words without success: the stamped address outside the envelope—how characteristic it was of the *thoughtless* lad to have omitted to use a plain one—*had been* rendered equally illegible. All on a sudden,

I caught a glimpse of dropped paper. 'Mr Lynx,' cried I, 'we are a couple of idiots. Here is the name of the envelope-maker. Surely we ought to have gone to him at once.'

Mr Inspector (doubtless because the suggestion ought to have emanated from himself) did not like this remark, and affected to see nothing in it. To the envelope-maker's, however, I insisted upon going, and he at once recognized his own handiwork. That envelope, he said, had been one of five thousand made by him for the *Oriental and Occidental Hotel* Company (Limited). He would take his Bible oath of that.

Mr Inspector shook his head, a movement, by the by, on which, as indicative of sagacious incredulity, he greatly prided himself.

'Well, there *may* be something in it,' quoth he reluctantly; 'we should never say die.'

'And yet it was "die" as did it,' observed the envelope-maker promptly; whereupon Mr Inspector shook his head in quite an appalling manner, as though a liberty had been taken with the majesty of the law.

We were not long in reaching the *Oriental and Occidental Hotel*, which was close to a railway terminus. At first, our inquiries only elicited that there was such an enormous custom, and so many changing faces [the place failed in about two months after this], that any recollection of an individual from description was out of the question. But from the manager and the head-waiter, I appealed to a very pretty chamber-maid, who passed us as we were in consultation, and *she* recognized my description of Master Richard Grubb without the smallest difficulty.

'*You* are not going to do him any harm, sir,'

hope?' asked she suddenly, in the midst of cross-examination.

'He has run away from his friends, my good girl,' said I, 'and his poor father is broken-hearted about him.'

'Well,' said she, blushing, 'if that is really the case'——

'Yes,' interrupted I, seeing her fingers irresolutely playing with a chain about her neck, 'you'll lend us the photograph he gave you, will you not?'

And with that she took it off upon the spot, detaching it from the handsome gold chain, to purchase which I am very sure that at least *one* of those ten-pound notes had been changed, and placed it in my hand. The impressionable Richard was likely to spend a good deal of the money after this fashion, but I did not at all regret his extravagance in the present instance. Thanks to his foolish vanity, I was now provided with a touchstone, by which in a moment I could discover whether he had been seen or not by any person to whom I showed it. For the rest, the intelligence I gained was far from assuring; the young gentleman had departed two days before by a certain afternoon train to Dover, doubtless on his way to the continent, which I had apprehended would be his destination from the first.

'What are we to do now, Mr Inspector?' inquired I, though, I must confess, without much hope of any useful suggestion.

'Well, sir,' replied that official, with his Lord Burleigh shake, 'what I always says when a case *comes to* a point like this—when a thread breaks short *off, as it* were, and you've only got the wrong end in

your hand: "Next to winning is to know when you're beat." And it's my opinion that we're beat here, and *dead* beat.'

'What!' cried I, tapping the photograph, 'do you mean to say that, just after having obtained such a link as this' [I didn't take the poor girl's *chain* from her], 'that you would counsel our giving up the paper chase?'

'Paper chase!' answered he sardonically; 'it's a wild-goose chase, sir, and nothing less. With nothin' to go upon except that pictur, I decline to risk my professional reputation on a tour in foreign parts.'

'You are wrong there,' said I, in a white-heat of passion; 'for the more you risk it, the better chance you will have of getting rid of such a rotten commodity!'

Mr Inspector (who, I *will* say for him, was imperturbable as to temper) only sublimely shook his head, and wished me a very good-day and the best of luck; and thus ended my connection with Scotland Yard. From that moment, I determined to be my own detective.

CHAPTER III.

THE task before me was now become more difficult than ever. Although Mr Lynx had been of no sort of use to me, I knew that I should feel the absence of a companion with a common object in view. I should now have no one to confer with, nay, possibly no one

to talk to, for I could speak no language but my own. The acquisition in early life of Greek, Latin, and the Tone—how different if it were the French accent!—does not at all facilitate travelling on the continent. On the other hand, I conjectured, and rightly, that Mr Richard Grubb was no better provided in this respect than I; and the fact that 'birds of a feather flock together'—never more apparent than in the case of helpless English when abroad—gave me hope that he and I should yet meet under the same roof before any great portion of those ten thousand pounds should have melted away. 'Abroad,' too, I felt confident, would with him mean Paris, although I omitted no inquiry to render that supposition a certainty. The train by which my fox had left London did not, I ascertained, meet any continental steamer; it was too late for that: therefore, it followed that he must, at all events, have remained in Dover for that night. Accordingly, I booked myself, in the first place, for that port. Upon my way down, the helplessness of my expedition and the derision of Mr Inspector made my heart very heavy, and again and again I pulled out the photograph, and solaced myself with the sight of that—the only straw to which I had to cling. A motherly—but slightly imaginative—old lady, who was in the same carriage, was moved to tears by this touching proceeding, and observed to me in pitiful accents, 'I see, sir, you, like me, have loved and lost. It cannot be your son, I think. Am I wrong in supposing the young man to have been your younger brother?'

'Madam,' said I, 'this is the portrait of one in whom I feel a far greater interest than any man, from

Cain to the present day, ever entertained for a younger brother.'

'He is not really lost, you know,' returned she cheerfully; 'he is only gone before.'

'I am very glad to hear you say so,' said I quietly. 'But seventy-two hours, let me tell you, is a tremendous start in a paper chase.'

The old lady made no further observations, and changed her carriage at the next station, rather hurriedly. My impression is, she thought I was mad.

At Dover—imitating as best I could my fox's probable proceedings—I drove to the nearest hotel, and having secured a room, commenced my inquiries.

No such young man had arrived at his house, said the landlord; but it might be worth my while to inquire a few doors off, where there was an inn kept by his son-in-law. I did so, and found I was on the right scent. Mr Richard Grubb had slept at *The Shepherd's Bush* on the night in question, and had left by the morning boat, bound, as he had given out, for Paris.

Foreign travel, to one who is unable to speak the language of the country in which he journeys, is, after the first freshness has worn off, exceedingly tedious work. There are indeed persons who like it, as there are those who will pay money to sit still, and watch the scenes of a strange panorama unfold themselves to the monotonous patter of a showman; but even they, without the showman, would drop off gorged with the eye-feast, after two or three hundred yards of it. Such expeditions, so far from 'opening the mind,' as they are supposed to do, only dull and daze it. They instruct no more than the shifting landscapes of a dream. Mag-

nificent natural scenery, indeed, has a universal tongue, but towns, inhabited by folks of alien speech, are desperately wearisome. And it was in a town I well knew, if anywhere, that I should find Richard Grubb. A young man who has ten thousand stolen pounds in his pocket does not incline to pastoral pleasures, and the occupancy of a châlet in the Alps; he does not appreciate Nature so much as *cafés chantants*, casinos, and the *bal mobile*. I had been abroad once or twice already, and even with intelligent English companions had not much enjoyed myself, and been a good deal bored. My expectations, therefore, during the intervals of sea-sickness, as I crossed the Channel on the present occasion, were not of an agreeable kind. Yet this time, when I was not seeking mere pleasure, I really think that I more nearly attained to it than I had ever done before. The importance of the object I had in view dwarfed all inconveniences, and the excitement of the paper chase forbade *ennui*. When there was no scent, I was rapt in making casts; and when I had found the trail, off I flew with nose to ground, as careless of the country through which I passed as any sleuth-hound. A very different sort of tour was mine from that which Englishmen abroad are wont to take. I did not dazzle myself with picture-galleries, nor accumulate mildew in those fine old churches (all so very much alike), nor tire my legs with miles of corridors in uncomfortable palaces, nor did I exhaust my small vocabulary (notwithstanding that my one cry was 'Grubb') in demanding novelties in the way of food. I knew that the young gentleman of whom I was *in search* would do none of these things, and I strove to [redacted]*ve* my conduct by his own. It was fortunate for my

purpose in this respect that he and I were similarly situated—each ignorant and speechless in an alien land. What it occurred to me to do, would probably have occurred to him. Thus, on the road to Paris, I determined, upon my arrival in that city, to be driven, as at Dover, to the nearest inn. For even if my fox had been recommended, while in London, to patronize any particular hotel, it was probable, foolish as he was, that he would have the wits to avoid it. It so happened, however, that in the immediate vicinity of the Paris terminus there were seven hotels, each of which was about as near to it as the other, and as I could not put up at them all, I was obliged to make my choice of one of them. I had purchased a French vocabulary at Dover, which would have taught me to speak French about as well as Mr Inspector Lynx had taught me the art of detection (it was chiefly devoted to drinking: '*Which do you prefer? Noyeau, Vanille,* or *Curaçoa?* &c.); but during the twelve hours it had been in my possession, I had picked out of the intolerable amount of sack a few half-pennyworths of useful bread—one or two questions adapted to my present need. By disregarding what was superfluous in these inquiries, and combining what was suitable to my purpose, I ingeniously constructed for myself the sentence, 'Have you seen my brother lately?' and with that and the photograph, I was prepared, like A Becket's wife of old, to perambulate all Europe in search of the desired object.

I deposited my luggage (if I may so denominate one little carpet-bag, with an elaborate lock, for the safe-keeping of those notes, if I should ever regain possession of them), and under pretence of ordering dinner, *at once* obtained audience of the head-waiter.

I suppose my accent must have betrayed me, for the person addressed smiled benignly, and answered with a polite bow, 'Sar, I do speak Ingleese.' If he did, I had certainly all my life been talking something else than my own mother-tongue; but it was not my place to contradict him. On the contrary, calling to mind what I had heard of the vanity of the French, I congratulated this individual upon his colloquial powers, ordered an expensive dinner for myself, and gave him a cigar made of a substance entirely unknown, as I have reason to believe, to a French waiter—namely, genuine tobacco. Upon this, we became such fast friends, that I had some subsequent trouble to get rid of him, so desirous was he to be my guide, philosopher, and friend in a tour of the capital of the world (as he entitled Paris), after his business hours should be concluded. But the worst of it was that he had not seen my brother, although he expressed a polite wish to do so, and protested he could 'recognize the likeness to Monsieur.' Foiled in my first attempt, I was in nowise discouraged; on the contrary, I felt that the sphere of my search was already growing limited, for if all garçons were like this garçon, it was among them, or at least from information which such would furnish, that I was most likely to find my fox. They would be attractive to him, since they spoke 'Ingleese;' but if they exhibited to him Paris after nightfall, they would be irresistible.

I strolled into the coffee-room of the hotel next door, and ordering a cup of coffee, addressed my newly-acquired shibboleth to the man that brought it:

Avez-vous dernièrement vu mon frère?

No. He had seen nobody at all like that good-

looking young gentleman. The barmaid was equally certain; if she had seen Monsieur's brother, it would have been quite impossible to forget him. It was funny enough that these good folks should endeavour to please me by praising the fellow who had done me more mischief than any other living man.

At the third hotel, into which I entered under pretence of wanting a *petit verre* (my vocabulary affording me endless excuses of that sort), I asked to see the visitors' list. It struck me that it was by no means improbable that Mr Richard Grubb would still retain his own name, from sheer want of imagination to invent another. It was not, however, in the category of Distinguished Persons who had lately patronized the *Hôtel de Fleuris*. But my own name was there, both front-name (as poor Artemus Ward used to call it) and surname, and their appearance astonished me not a little. Of course there might be more than one Robert Granby in the world, but still the coincidence was striking; and pointing to the entry in question, which was in a handwriting quite unknown to me, I asked whether that gentleman was still in the house. No. The young banker—did I know him?—had departed only last night for Geneva, with his two friends, Monsieur Joan and Monsieur Smit, whose names were bracketed with his own.

'Banker?' said I. 'Then this is his portrait, is it not?' and I pulled out the inestimable photograph.

Yes, indeed. That was the young banker Ingleese himself, although by no means a flattering likeness. Monsieur was evidently a relative. My nephew—ah, my brother, was it?—well, he was a fine free-handed young gentleman; so young, and yet so rich; and of such

pleasant manners, that it was quite a pleasure to serve him.

Charmed with this praise of my fascinating young kinsman, I gave the waiter a five-franc piece, and learned from him straightway all I wished to know—and more.

Mr Richard Grubb had patronized this establishment for the whole of his short Parisian visit, and thanks to my informant, seemed to have seen a good deal of town-life within the first twenty-four hours. After that time, Messieurs Joan and Smit, his countrymen, and also voyagers for pleasure, had made his acquaintance, and taken him to themselves. The three had certainly taken the train together for Geneva, but for what hotel they had not stated.

Of course I was much interested to know what sort of gentry these might be, but here Pierre (my brother had already got to call him by his Christian name, he said) could not assist me. Whether they were dangerous associates for the young man, or mere tourists, as they described themselves to be, I could not discover. It was easy to see, indeed, that Pierre did not like them; but that might follow from their having taken so plump a pigeon out of his itching hands. Yet, if they were really rogues, how vastly greater would be the opportunity afforded for getting rid of the stolen notes! Although I had found the trail, and the scent was fresh, and, as it were, breast-high, I had never felt more despondent of final success than when I took my railway ticket the next morning for Geneva. I had no longer only to deal with one with whose nature I *was* acquainted, and whose course of conduct I could *almost* predict, but with total strangers. One thing

only comforted me: they had not, when they left Paris, been put in possession of the lad's secret: otherwise, neither of them would have written Robert Granby's name in the visitor's book, far less have coupled it with their own. He had certainly deceived them up to that time. It was doubtless indiscreet of him to have assumed my name, but not so much so as it had appeared at the first glance. It was a bold stroke—bolder than I had dreamed him capable of—to personate the very man he had robbed; but there were considerable advantages about it. It saved him a great deal of deception, and the necessity for making a world of false statements tally with one another. His assumed trade of banker accounted for his possession of a large sum of money, and his knowledge of my affairs enabled him to reply plausibly to all unpleasant questions. He would probably, however, not have volunteered information of any kind, and the placing his name in the visitors' list had been an unfortunate accident, caused, perhaps, by the vanity of Monsieur Smit or Joan, proud of travelling in company with such a young millionnaire. It was thus I accounted to myself for what had happened, as I flew along through hill and over valley, in sunlight or gloom. By city or ruin, past factory or fortress, by winding river or treeless plain; it was all one to me. I ate, but not for appetite; I slept—no, in vain I tried to sleep: so soon as I closed my eyes, the numbers of those stolen notes came sliding in upon the retina, and my tongue involuntarily repeated them one by one. If I had been another hour on the journey, I verily believe that I should have gone mad.

Arrived at Geneva, I suffered myself to be taken

possession of by the first hotel tout that offered. It was no longer of any use to calculate upon what my fox would have done. At the *Four Seasons* I secured a bed, and then, as usual, the ear of the head-waiter. Of Monsieur Granby he never had had the happiness of hearing, but three gentlemen had arrived the previous day—of one of whom the photograph I produced was certainly the portrait — and being dissatisfied with the accommodation afforded (the young gentleman in question was a *milor*, he said, and very particular about the situation of his apartments), had taken themselves off elsewhere.—No, he knew not whither; for there were inns and inns at Geneva; but he would answer for it that the young *milor* would be disappointed in getting better rooms than those which had been offered to him at the *Four Seasons*. Heavens! would Monsieur see these apartments that had been rejected, though once occupied by a Serene Highness?

This was good news thus far. Messrs Jones and Smith—for in this fastidiousness I did not recognize Mr Grubb at all—were evidently no rogues, but only Snobs. For the first time since I parted with Mr Inspector Lynx, I now 'put myself into communication' with the police; and armed with a warrant, or the Swiss equivalent to it, for the apprehension of my young scapegrace, and attended by a gendarme in plain clothes, I proceeded to explore the town. There are not many first-class inns, suitable for a great man's lodging, in Geneva, and at the third hotel we visited, we found my three gentlemen located.

The young *milor* and Monsieur Smit were not at present within-doors; but Monsieur Joan, yes, he was in the coffee-room at that moment. Ordering some

slight refreshment, we seated ourselves accordingly in that apartment, at the next table to the individual in question—a loud talking, vulgar young fellow, but one, to all appearance, with no worse faults about him than the want of wits and good-manners. He was boasting to a fellow-countryman, who sat near him, of the wealth and good connections of his friend Granby, with whom he was travelling, and detailing their common plans with the most engaging frankness. They had had already enough, he said, of Switzerland, where there was nothing like life to be seen, and were about to make a tour in Italy. His two friends had just gone to the railway station to make inquiries, and he wondered why they had not already returned.

How sick at heart I felt when I heard these words! Perhaps the young scoundrel whom I sought had caught sight of my face unknown to me, and was already far away. But there was nothing for it but to wait and watch. In the mean time, I had the pleasure of listening to what was in substance my own biography, as narrated with embellishments by Mr Jones. I had previously no idea of how distinguished an individual I really was. The scion of a noble race, and educated under the most aristocratic auspices, I had nevertheless stooped to commercial pursuits, and made for myself at one-and-twenty a gigantic fortune. In the middle of a highly flattering description of the respectable firm to which I had the honour to belong, and which was represented as superior in credit to Barings, my fox and Mr Smith walked into the saloon.

I should scarcely have recognized my young friend, he was so exceedingly well dressed, and had such an *air of fashion*; but Mr Richard Grubb recognized me

on the instant, and his handsome face turned from red to green with the rapidity of a railway danger-signal.

I rose and advanced towards him. He made one wretched effort to misunderstand me, to affect that I was under a mistake as to his identity, and then fainted away. That night he was accommodated by my assistant with a cell at the police-office, in place of the handsomely-furnished apartment which had been so fortunate as to receive his approbation. Upon searching his effects, which comprehended a very fashionable wardrobe, two new portmanteaus and a hat-box, and a dressing-case with silver-gilt fittings, I discovered the whole of the stolen notes, save one hundred and fifty pounds, which considerable sum he had contrived to get rid of in less than a fortnight. However, I was thankful enough to find matters no worse; and somewhat relenting, nay, not altogether without pity for his fallen fortunes, I next day took the lad out of jail, and lodged him at the *Four Seasons*. He no longer despised the accommodation there afforded to him, and I was not so ungenerous as to disclose the real state of affairs to those who had known him in his short-lived prosperity. I gave out that he was a very delicate boy, and that I was his guardian, who had just rescued him from certain undesirable acquaintances. He sat by my side at the table-d'hôte, and the waiters would never help him until I had satisfied them that the dish was wholesome for him. Poor wretch, he looked pale and ill enough to have been almost on the point of death! And so, locking him in his chamber every night, wherever we put up, and never leaving his side by day, I brought the lad home to his afflicted father. For the latter's sake, we did not

prosecute the misguided youth; and indeed having been his close companion—although an involuntary one—for nearly a week, I should hardly have liked to have got in the witness-box to swear away his liberty, perhaps for life.

Nor, I am glad to say, was this clemency misplaced. Grubb, junior, has emigrated to the antipodes, where his conduct promises to be the antipodes of what it was at Millsome. His father is still with us, bound to us more than ever, in that we spared his only son from ruin. The firm prospers—albeit it has not yet reached the eminence ascribed to it by Monsieur Joan—and that, though still junior partner, my opinion carries no small weight with it, is owing chiefly, I am told, to the perseverance and sagacity with which I conducted that singular paper chase, and eventually ran down the Fox.

THE END.

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